

EXPLOITATION OF DIGITAL STORYTELLING
AND MANIPULATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA
IN ADVERTISING:
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS
A THESIS
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Dedication

First and foremost, I would like to dedicate this to my parents, Mickey Hoe and Philomena Fook. Daddy, you have always let me be myself. Mommy, you taught me perseverance and courage, even if I never quite listened to you.

I would also like to dedicate this to my friend, Goh Ai Yat. If not for you, all this would have remained a dream. Thank you!

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Abstract

Businesses, be it large corporations or small, and medium businesses are today hard pressed to find ways to effectively reach out to consumers. The simple reason for this is the advancements in technology. The Internet is forcing marketers to adopt new methods of engagement. Thus, businesses are jumping on the social media bandwagon. However, presence on social media networks does not necessarily equate to interactivity and engagement with consumers. This research examines three automobile companies for interactivity and engagement using thematic analysis and a multi-platform interactivity analysis. The conclusions drawn from this research are: (1) companies are good at interacting or engaging but are seldom good at both, and (2) companies do not necessarily utilize their online resources on multiple platforms efficiently.

INTERACTIVITY & ENGAGEMENT

Chapter 1: Introduction

Toyota Motor Corporation [Toyota] found itself in an unprecedented position in North America following its massive recall campaign and \$16.4 million fine proposed by the U.S. Department of Transportation. Toyota was accused of failing to make public the safety problems related to its vehicles, which allegedly led to fatal accidents. Due to the cover-up, Toyota's stellar reputation was tarnished. Toyota consumers and loyalists were betrayed and something had to be done quickly to salvage its once flawless reputation. Its previous aversion to social media had to be reassessed. In the end, Toyota turned on the offensive, launching a seemingly interactive and engaging marketing strategy by using new media technologies, such as the likes of Facebook, Twitter and digital storytelling, to help restore its standing as one of the leading automobile manufacturers in North America.

In the last few years, businesses have jumped on the new media technologies bandwagon as they strive to interact and engage their consumers. As marketing has evolved from being product-centric to consumer-centric, it is increasingly common for businesses, particularly of consumer products and services, to involve their consumers in the selling of their products and co-creating their brand. Businesses are also starting to invite their consumers to share their personal stories with the hope that marketers may be

able to unlock the mystery of what consumers want. There has probably not been another time when consumers have had so much influence in the success or failure of a brand.

This research seeks to examine the use of Facebook as a way to interact and engage consumers as well as the exploitation of digital storytelling in advertising, by corporations, as a tool to build brand. The approach is eclectic, whereby two specific methods will be employed to derive a better understanding of the power of consumer digital stories on branding and the use of Facebook as an interface between a brand or corporation and its consumer.

The aforementioned methods are thematic analysis and a multiple interactivities analysis. Through these two approaches, this study will determine if companies today are in fact engaging and interacting with their target demographic through the various platforms available today.

Rationale for Study

Toyota Motor Corporation would not be blamed if it thought it had achieved invincibility in North America. Despite being a foreign automobile manufacturer in a strongly nationalistic society, it had steadily built itself a reputation for safety, quality and value in the last decade. It was unrivalled at the top of the *Consumer Reports Car Brand Perception Surveys* for the years 2008 and 2009. It is famed for its philosophy, values and manufacturing ideals. These are the cornerstone of the company's entire operations as well as processes, and were christened *The Toyota Way* ("The Toyota Way", 2010). The core of the company's mantra is continuous improvement and respect for people. Through religious compliance to *The Toyota Way* principles, Toyota has grown to

become the largest automobile manufacturer in the world based on sales and production figures (“Toyota”, 2010).

However, in November 2009, Toyota Motor Corporation was pressured to enforce a massive recall campaign in North America. They identified the problems as a sticky accelerator and a problematic car floor mat. Both were problems that affected several models of the Toyota fleet. Resultant to that, and because they had to accommodate the large volume of recalls, Toyota temporarily stopped the production and sales of several models of its vehicles. The entire Toyota team was focused on the recall process for an entire month.

Unfortunately, that was not the end of it. Toyota was accused of not acknowledging these manufacturing defects but instead, of covering up the problems. Consequently, Toyota was forced to pay a hefty fine of \$16.4 million for its mistake of not going public about the defects immediately (“Toyota”, 2010).

If prior to the recent problems, Toyota was famed for the quality and safety of its vehicles, needless to say, the stellar reputation that the Japanese automobile manufacturing company had built was now tarnished (Isidore, 2010). Toyota was making headlines in every major newspaper, on every news channel, and on the World Wide Web through social media networks and forums. CNN.com dedicated special and complete coverage to the Toyota recall. It was extraordinary publicity that any business organization would hope for, if not because the coverage was mainly negative and quite quickly altering consumers’ perception of the brand.

Toyota Motor Corporation was left staring at a mammoth task ahead. It had to make sense of the predicament it was in and then devise the best strategy to rebound and

rebuild its broken reputation. The task was especially difficult as some accidents allegedly related to the sticky accelerator and problematic floor mats were fatal. To make matters more challenging, it was discovered that Toyota indeed had been aware of the safety issues related to their vehicles but had turned a blind eye on them. It had even withheld evidence in certain cases where lawsuits were filed against the company. Instead of admitting the problem and sending out an immediate recall, Toyota conveniently concealed the problem (Clifford, 2010).

On February 24, 2010, Chief Executive Officer, Akio Toyoda as well as president and Chief Operating Officer, Yoshimi Inaba represented Toyota before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. On behalf of Toyota Motor Corporation, Toyoda apologized to its consumers and expressed his sympathy to the bereaved families. He further outlined Toyota's plans to ensure the soundness of its fleet and vowed to increase company responsiveness to complaints from its consumers. Furthermore, Toyoda reaffirmed the corporation's commitment to public safety ("Toyota president testifies," 2010).

By then, the damage had already been done. As Taylor III (2010) reported, "according to a confidential market research study reviewed by *Fortune*, the recalls have battered Toyota's reputation in every measurable category, including brand consideration – an essential step in the decision process that leads to buying a car." The Kellogg School of Management Faculty Members (2010) quoted managerial economics and decision sciences professor, Daniel Diermeier who pointedly argued the case in these vivid terms:

[Toyota's battered reputation] escalated because of what the company didn't do early on – which was try to rebuild trust. ... Toyota has to re-establish the belief among customers that quality is the most important thing for the company. ... They need to have a sustained campaign that focuses on quality, safety, durability, for weeks, maybe months. Advertising has to be an important component of that as well.

In the months to follow, Toyota Motor Corporation took itself to task and began repairing its image. Toyota chose to interact with consumers directly on a consumer-centric platform. Thus, Toyota engaged Federation Media to gather Twitter conversations about the company through “Toyota Conversations,” a one-stop website for all things Toyota on the Internet. There was no limit to the types of news items and they included video, news, tweets, and/or pictures (Rao, 2010). Toyota also designated five people to contribute to its Twitter account. This channel helped bridge the communication gap between Toyota and its customers as well as potential customers.

On top of that, Toyota launched its very own Toyota “Auto-biography” Facebook campaign as part of its advertising and marketing strategy. This campaign was created by Saatchi & Saatchi, whereby Toyota owners were invited to submit stories about their private vehicles via Facebook (Lacy, 2010). This campaign was launched on July 2, 2010 and in less than five months, it was observed that more than 300,000 people had “Liked” the Toyota USA Facebook page while countless number of people have submitted their stories.

Toyota went one step further by employing professionals to transform the chosen text-based stories with still imagery into narrated and visually appealing digital stories.

The consumers' actual voices were used to narrate the personal stories and professionals were tasked to animate the stories. This became part of Toyota's advertising campaign on Facebook, Hulu, and YouTube.

Unlike traditional advertisements, these consumer stories were real and specific to Toyota's target markets, particularly first-time car buyers and families (Lacy, 2010). The first-person narrated stories were accompanied by moving images and music but most importantly, they were all personal stories, thus satisfying the elements of digital storytelling. Moreover, because these stories also occur within a Facebook context, these personal stories are particularly appropriate in this digital context.

Toyota's strategic approach seemed to satisfy the two key points in marketing today – interactivity and engagement (Mollen & Wilson, 2010). Toyota's strategy to revive itself was also clever because it took advantage of the relationship it had built with its consumers, be it directly or indirectly.

Soon after Toyota's "Auto-biography" Facebook campaign, Mercedes-Benz USA announced the launch of its Mercedes-Benz USA Impact campaign on Facebook. This is an online film series on their corporate website, which featured true, unscripted stories of Mercedes-Benz owners, who walked away from life-threatening accidents in their Mercedes.

Ford Motor Company is another company that has used real life consumers in its commercials. Ford's selling point is that the videos show "people sharing their thoughts and opinions about new Ford cars, crossovers and SUVs." Similar to Mercedes, Toyota's "One More Reason" advertisements are unscripted. While they are personal opinions, they do not fall under the category of digital storytelling.

Thus, this research seeks to compare these marketing communications strategies employed by Ford, Mercedes and Toyota. One point to note is that at the point of this research, there were no other known companies that had employed digital storytelling as defined below. Coincidentally, all three companies come from the automobile industry.

Necessary Terms

Before proceeding further, it is imperative to define several key terms that will be used throughout this research topic. These are the definitions adopted specifically for this research so as to maintain consistency throughout.

The first word is *digital storytelling* and its definition is adopted from the Center for Digital Storytelling [CDS], that defines it as “a short, first person video-narrative created by combining recorded voice, still and moving images and music or other sounds” (Center for Digital Storytelling, (n.d.)). It is akin to a mini film but longer than a traditional advertisement. It is imperative to understand that the key element of a *digital story* is that it is a personal story and narrated by the *digital storyteller* itself, often to make a point (Lambert, 2006). Such stories can range from a story about someone important to a particular place, event, or experience, as well as about one’s career and achievements.

Digital storytelling essentially blends *digital media* with *technology*. The result of that is *new media technologies*, which this research defines as any *digital media* that is used to communicate, share, educate, organize, build community, and network via technological platforms such as organizational websites and social networks. The distinct quality of *new media technologies* is that it is a “many-to-many” vehicle and it is two-way communication. What this means is that messages can be personalized yet be sent to

a mass audience simultaneously, and its sender and receiver both have control over the content (Crosbie, 2002). *New media technologies* have been successfully adopted by various groups and instrumental in organizing and propagating various causes including social and political change (“New Media,” 2011).

As a result of *new media technologies*, many new technology-based vehicles have arrived, the most prominent of which are *social networks*, which is defined by Oxford Dictionaries Online as “a dedicated website or other application that enables users to communicate with each other by posting information, comments, messages, images, etc.” (“social network,” 2010). *Social network* may be used interchangeably with *social media*. The most popular of all *social networks* is *Facebook*.

Facebook is a social networking website that enables its users to create online profiles, join groups created by any individual or entity unless permission is restricted, add friends, send and receive messages via various channels, and share various forms of media including still and moving images (“Facebook,” 2011).

Another popular social network is *YouTube*, which is a public, free video sharing website that allows its registered users to upload, view and share videos. Previously, *YouTube* limited the file size for uploads but since December 2010, standard account holders with a history of compliance to *YouTube*’s Community Guidelines and copyright policy are permitted unlimited video uploads (“Youtube,” 2010).

For this research, the terms *corporation*, *business*, and *company* will be used interchangeably. These words are defined, or represent, “a commercial business” (“company”, 2010). It is also important to understand *marketing* because it is an essential element of business. The American Marketing Association [AMA] has defined

marketing as “an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organizations and its stakeholders” (“Marketing,” 2011).

The next term that will be used often in this research is *consumer*, which is “traditionally, the ultimate user or consumer of goods, ideas and services... [but] also is used to imply the buyer or decision maker as well as the ultimate consumer,” as defined by the AMA (“Consumer,” 2011). The word *consumer* may be used interchangeably with the word *customer*. A related word is *audience*, which refers to a particular consumer or customer that is more inclined to give attention to a particular business and its propositions (“Audience,” 2011).

Another term that will be used in this research is *emotions*. The AMA uses the term *emotion* interchangeably with *attitude*, which they define from a consumer behavior viewpoint as “a person’s overall evaluation of a concept; an affective response involving general feelings of liking or favorability” (“Attitude,” 2011). *Emotional appeals* is also called *buying motives* and defined as “the forces that have been activated into a state of tension causing the buyer to seek satisfaction of a specific need. Organizational buyers are influenced by both rational appeals and *emotional appeals*.” (“Buying motives,” 2011).

Emotional appeals can also influence the *branding* of a product or service. Thus, this research adopts the AMA’s explicit definition of *brand* and *branding* as an “experience represented by a collection of images and ideas; often, it refers to a symbol such as a name, logo, slogan, and design scheme. Brand recognition and other reactions

are created by the accumulation of experiences with the specific product or service, both directly relating to its use, and through the influence of advertising, design, and media commentary” (“Brand and branding,” 2011).

The common vehicle for *emotional appeals* is *advertisement*. The definition of *advertisement* as defined by the AMA is “any announcement or persuasive message placed in the mass media in paid or donated time or space by an identified individual, company, or organization.” (“Advertisement,” 2011). *Advertisement* is used interchangeably with *commercial* or *ad*. Another term is *authentic*, which the Oxford Dictionaries defines as “genuine” as well as “based on facts; accurate or reliable” (“Authentic,” 2011). This research will consider an unscripted commercial as satisfying the notion of *authenticity*.

In relation to *authenticity* is the definition of *personal story*. First, this research considers the definitions of *personal* and *story*. The Oxford Dictionaries Online defines *personal* as “of, affecting or belonging to a particular person rather than to anyone else” (“Personal,” 2011). *Story* is defined as “an account of past events in someone’s life or in the evolution of something” (“Story,” 2011). Amalgamating the two definitions together, this research has outlined the definition of *personal story* as a true account of a past event, as experienced by the storyteller, that is usually told with or for a specific purpose.

Furthermore, when someone recounts a *personal story*, it is possible that the listeners of the story “empathetically insert themselves into [the story], vicariously reexperiencing what took place” (Goffman, 1974). Miller (2009) adds, “Such listenings sow the seeds for vicarious retellings.” The person who tells a *personal story* is referred to as the *storyteller* or *narrator*.

This research will be making a lot of references to *Facebook* and the various elements that come with it; thus, it is crucial to define the key terms related to this *social network*. The first term associated with *Facebook* is *Page*, with a capital ‘P.’ This is a term reserved for *businesses*, organizations or other special interest groups to connect with their *audience*. The *business*, organization or other special interest group that initiates a *Facebook Page* is the *Page owner*. A *Page* is similar to the ‘profile’ for individuals (“Help center facebook,” 2011). People are able to *Like* these *Facebook Pages*, after which they will be added to the list of people who *Like* the *Page owner* and thus have the privilege to post on its *Wall* (Chapman, n.d.). For the purpose of clarity, this research will distinguish the *Facebook Like* by capitalizing the ‘L’ in the word.

A *page*, with lowercase ‘p’ refers to the *pages* within a *Page*, such as the *Wall* and *Info*. These *pages* may be added or removed as the *Page owner* chooses. For example, Toyota launched the *Toyota Auto-biography Facebook Campaign* by adding a dedicated *page* to its *Facebook Page*. The *Wall* is very often the first *page* people see and is a place where the *fans* and the *Page owner* can *comment*, or leave public messages, that can be viewed by people who *Like* the *Page*. These public messages are also known as *Wall posts*. Furthermore, people who *Like* a *Page* may *Like* and *comment* on the *Wall posts*.

Organization of Research

As this research attempts to examine the marketing communications strategies undertaken by Ford Motor Company, Mercedes Benz USA and Toyota Motor Corporation respectively, with particular interest in the use of *Facebook Pages* as well as digital storytelling by the latter two corporations, the following chapter will review the literature associated with marketing and communications. The third chapter details the

methodology employed in this research and details the relevant procedures involved to tackle the pertinent questions this research seeks to answer. The fourth chapter will plot the results obtained from the above-mentioned research methodology and the subsequent chapter will discuss the future implications arising from this research, including the foreseeable limitations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This research analyzes the marketing communications strategy undertaken by Ford Motor Company [Ford], Mercedes Benz USA [Mercedes] and Toyota Motor Corporation [Toyota], with particular interest in the use of *Facebook Pages*, as well as digital storytelling by the latter two corporations. Specific research on the use of social media and the application of digital storytelling in business is currently extremely limited, despite many studies exploring the use of traditional, or oral, storytelling in business. Yet, in order to fully understand and subsequently analyze these corporations' preferred communications strategies, it is imperative to be informed about prior related research on the subjects of marketing, including advertising, and digital storytelling.

This research will explore the different topics with breadth and depth that will justify the findings at the end of the research. The results are expected to uncover certain themes that suggest an alternative way to tackle marketing communications in a world that is increasingly technology dependent and consumer-focused.

Consumer behavior

Technology has run riot in the world of business and the field of marketing has not been spared the effects of ever-changing, quickly advancing technologies (Capon & Glazer, 1987). Thus, it is imperative for companies to learn to address and manage these changes in a timely fashion to ensure, at the very least, financial stability and

sustainability (Capon & Glazer, 1987). In line with these developments, traditional advertising's influence is eroding, as new media technologies are quick and easy to adopt, while being an attractive option in terms of appeal, engagement and interactivity. Indeed, newer forms of digital marketing such as social media advertising and content syndication are slowly usurping traditional advertising.

Why are we witnessing this shift in marketing communication strategies? Quite simply, it is because consumer behavior has evolved, thanks to the rise of the “digital natives.” Prensky (2001) defines “digital natives” as “native speakers of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet.” This, in contrast to the “digital immigrant”, which Prensky (2001) similarly defines as those who have adapted and adopted new technology.

The line that divides the two is known as the digital divide and Prensky puts this divisive line at about the year 1985 (“The rise of,” 2009). In the beginning, the differences between digital natives and the digital immigrants were stark. Digital natives were assumed to be very comfortable in an online environment, and are described as more inclined to multimedia formats over text. Further to that, digital natives are said to be more likely to use online reviews from peers, social networks or crowdsourcing options before making a purchase decision (“The rise of,” 2009).

However, this digital divide may be shrinking. Madden (2010) found that adults aged 50 and above were increasingly joining social networks. The number of people in this demographic partaking in social networking is said to have almost doubled from April 2009 to April 2010. These numbers are expected to continue increasing. Further to

that, despite the gap, Jansen (2010) found that those aged 50 and above also actively research products online, even if they are not reviewing products as actively.

When it comes to branding, digital natives and digital immigrants are rather alike, in the sense that both have an affinity to building relationships with brands. The difference between them is in how they approach that relationship. On the one hand, digital natives prefer experiential branding because they want to be part of the creation of a brand. This includes the use of social networks to seek opinions; through personal contact on Facebook or via polling on Twitter. In short, it is common for digital natives to seek answers in public spaces online. On the other hand, digital immigrants report a preference for seeking opinions in more traditional ways such as personal contact or via email (“The rise of,” 2009).

One of the ways that digital natives get involved in experiential branding is by leaving feedback or creating their own content, oftentimes in multimedia format. In 2007, Lenhart, Madden, Macgill & Smith (2007) surveyed teenagers and “found that 64 percent of online teens ages 12-17 have participated in one or more among a wide range of content-creating activities on the internet, up from 57 percent of online teens in a similar survey at the end of 2004.” The reason for this could be explained by the fact that 89 percent of respondents agreed that their digital still or moving images posts occasionally, or often, elicited feedback from other people (Lenhart et al., 2007). In other words, their online activities resulted in “conversations,” which was incentive enough for them to continue generating content for online consumption.

User-generated content

User-generated content [UGC] “refers to media content created or produced by the general public rather than by paid professionals and primarily distributed on the Internet” (Daugherty, Eastin & Bright, 2008). UGC was made possible by the advent of technology, especially the availability and affordability of the tools required to facilitate UGC. This includes hardware such as cameras, computers and video recording equipment, as well as software such as film editing suites and image manipulation software. For example, previously, one would need a video recorder to record video, a digital voice recorder for crisp audio and a powerful computer with professional editing software to produce a short video clip but today, one only needs an *iPhone 4* to do all of the above (“Hd video recording”, 2011).

The exponential growth of UGC received additional boost with the beta release of YouTube in May 2005. YouTube is a free, online video-sharing site and by the time it was officially launched in December 2005, it was recording as many as eight million videos being viewed each day. In July 2006, YouTube recorded 100 million videos being watched and 65,000 videos being uploaded each day (“Timeline,” 2010).

Parallel to YouTube’s stunning growth, Lenhart et al. (2007) found that, as of December 2007, there was a 45 percent year-to-year increase, from 33 percent to 48 percent, in the number of internet users who had visited a video-sharing site. Fast-forward to March 2010, and YouTube recorded 24 hours of video uploaded per minute. In May 2010, more than two billions views were recorded in one day on YouTube alone (“Timeline,” 2010).

Similarly, Purcell (2010) discovered that about 69 percent of adult Internet users in the United States have watched or downloaded video while the heaviest users still are in the 18 to 29 years old age bracket.

Admittedly, UGC is not limited to videos. UGC also exists as blogs, personal websites, reviews on online retailers' websites, consumer groups websites including forums, tweets, and Facebook status messages. Whatever form or fashion UGC takes though, it has effectively tipped the scale to benefit the consumer and because of this, marketers are even harder pressed to decipher the precise motivations that influence consumers' consumption of media (McQuail, 2000). This is crucial to marketers because UGC enables consumers to sway perceptions of any particular brand, as well as increase or decrease purchase rates and market share (Bughin, Doogan & Vetvik, 2010, p. 2).

Marketers who successfully break down these motivations and adapt their marketing strategies accordingly are well rewarded. The prize is word-of-mouth marketing that is a driving force for consumers' purchase decisions.

Bughin et al. (2010) have broken down the word of mouth marketing experience into three distinct forms. *Experiential* word of mouth is the most powerful. It also makes up the bulk of word-of-mouth activity at 50 percent to 80 percent, and is often sparked by a good or bad experience with a product or service or, when a consumer's experience exceeds or fails to meet expectations. *Experiential* is followed by *consequential* word of mouth, and both have greater effect than traditional advertisements. *Intentional* word of mouth, which is also the use of celebrity endorsements, is the weakest of the three forms.

Marketers have tried to exploit word-of-mouth marketing by using viral marketing campaigns. Viral marketing is "the process of getting customers to pass along

a company's marketing message to friends, family and colleagues" (Laudon & Traver, 2001, p. 381). A successful viral marketing campaign can create widespread interest and awareness in a brand's products and services, as word of mouth promotions increase a brand's credibility quotient (Dobele, Lindgreen, Beverland, Vanhamme & van Wijk, 2007).

Currently, one of the most attractive and convenient platforms for word-of-mouth marketing is Facebook, which is a social network boasting more than 500 million active users worldwide, with about 30 percent of users based within the United States. It has been recorded that people spend more than 700 billion minutes per month on Facebook ("Statistics", 2011).

Gil-Or (2010) studied the use of Facebook in viral marketing and he found a "very strong virality of the message that was mostly reactively distributed between the Facebook members" (p. 7). In other words, Facebook users indirectly help marketers do the marketing just by joining a particular group (p. 11).

Emotional connectedness

From a communications perspective, this research begged the question why word-of-mouth or viral marketing have proven to be so popular and compel people to share messages. Dobele et al. (2007) say that for people to do so, these messages must "capture the imagination of the recipient, ... be clearly targeted," and fundamentally, create an emotional connection.

Emotion is regarded as "a strong, highly valenced feeling state [and] represents an organized, highly structured reaction to an event that is relevant to the needs, goals, or survival of the organism" (Watson & Clark, 1994, p. 89). Advertisers use emotion to

effectively build a brand as well as to persuade consumers in their purchasing decisions (Mehta & Purvis, 2006), and rightfully so as Hebb (2002) asserted, humans are emotional creatures, more so than animals. Bagozzi, Gopinath & Nyer (1999) stated that:

Emotions are ubiquitous throughout marketing. They influence information processing, mediate responses to persuasive appeals, measure the effects of marketing stimuli, initiate goal setting, enact goal-directed behaviors, and serve as ends and measures of consumer welfare.

Hill (2010) concurs:

Consumers evaluate an offer – by which is meant a product, service or experience deliberately created for the consumer – by internalizing it and assigning it emotional value. So add the right emotional cues to trigger a positive consumer encounter. Then consumers will intuitively form a strong connection to the offer deep in their emotional brain. Better yet, it will be a connection customized by their feelings about the offer and in which they will have invested emotionally, thereby creating a resilient barrier against entry by the competition (p. 31).

In short, brands must have personality. However, there is an obvious caveat – companies that make emotional promises must also deliver, otherwise they risk losing credibility and destroying their reputation (p. 115).

In another study, Heath (2007) compared engagement versus attention. He found that people evaluated brands more favorably through emotional ‘creative’ content than the rational ‘message.’ Thus, he recommends advertisers interested in building a brand to engage consumers on an emotional level. On the other hand, advertisers whose objective is disseminating information should engage consumers’ attention. Thus, if an advertiser

wishes to build brand and communicate clearly, the advertiser must engage and command the attention of consumers.

Interactivity

Businesses today are challenged by a different, more dynamic marketing reality (Shiffman, 2008). To be noticed, a brand must command the attention of consumers. People are bombarded by thousands of brand messages each day and thus anyone or anything that might want to attract consumers' attention ought to try something unprecedented (Petrecca, 2007). Heath (2007) defines the *level of attention* as "the amount of conscious 'thinking' going on when an advertisement is being processed."

On top of that, companies must tap on consumers via all types of media. Ball State University's Middletown Media Studies found that people are condensing 12 hours of media exposure each day into nine hours by overlapping the consumption of various media (Zigmond & Stipp, 2011). People are watching TV while being connected on a laptop or a smartphone. Google search patterns revealed that viewers were actively searching for more information online about the items being advertised on television during the 2010 Olympics opening ceremony (Zigmond & Stipp, 2011).

How would an advertiser and marketer take advantage of this? The answer is interactivity, the buzzword that describes today's marketplace (Groom, 2008). Liu & Shrum (2002) define interactivity as:

The degree to which two or more communication parties can act on each other, on the communication medium, and on the messages and the degree to which such influences are synchronized.

One of the significant consequences of interactivity is the end of mass marketing (Schultz, Tannenbaum & Lauterborn, 1993). Thus, Schultz et al. proposed a new way to consider marketing, and that is known as Integrated Marketing Communications [IMC].

It is

a new way of looking at the whole, where once we only saw parts such as advertising, public relations, sales promotion, purchasing, employee communications... Integrated marketing communications means talking to people who buy or don't buy based on what they see, hear, feel, etc. – and not just about [a] product or service. It means eliciting a response, not just conducting a monologue. And it means being accountable for results ... delivering a return on investment, not just a spending budget. (Schultz, Tannenbaum, & Lauterborn, 1993, p. xvii)

Moving forward, Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism refined the definition further to:

Integrated marketing communications is the process of developing and implementing various forms of persuasive communication programs with customers and prospects over time. The goal of IMC is to influence or directly affect the behavior of the selected communications audience. IMC considers all sources of brand or company contacts that a customer or prospect has with the product or service as potential delivery channels for future messages. Further, IMC makes use of all forms of communication which are relevant to the customers and prospects, and to which they might be receptive. In sum, the IMC process starts with the customer or prospect and then works back to determine and

define the forms and methods through which persuasive communication programs should be developed. (quoted in Percy, 1997, p. 2)

Fortunately, social media networks, particularly Facebook has made it easier to interact with other people and made the process simpler, easy-to-use and seamless. However, although Facebook has great potential and offers tremendous advantages, it is insufficient to provide random content on this social media because consumers are already bombarded by information constantly. At the same time, captivating content is not simply a good advertising copy but rather, it has to be *conversational*. The information has to be absorbing, attractive to the eye and compelling. Unless and until this is done, the consequence is untimely death, such as the demise of MySpace bands with large fan bases. (Lee, 2011). Morran (2011) concurs by saying, “View social media as a conversation with customers, one in which the customers do most of the talking.”

Before being able to do so, it is imperative to understand what interactivity is.

Liu & Shrum (2002) suggest three dimensions of interactivity:

1. Active Control - Characterized by voluntary and instrumental action that directly influences the controller’s experience.
2. Two-Way Communication - Refers to the ability for reciprocal communication between companies and users and users and users.
3. Synchronicity - Refers to the degree to which users’ input into a communication and the response they receive from the communication are simultaneous.

(pp. 54-55)

Similarly, Yacci (2000) offers four basics of interactivity for online and distance education, which this research has adapted to the social media relationship between companies and users as well as users and users. They are:

1. Interactivity is a message loop;
2. Social interactivity occurs from the consumer's point of view and does not occur until a message loop *from* and *back* to the consumer has been completed;
3. Social interactivity has two distinct classes of outputs: content and engagement;
4. Messages in an interaction must be mutually coherent.

So now we have that in order to capture attention, companies must be interactive, whereby content must be *conversational* and must give users active control, promote two-way communication, and be synchronous. How do you engage an audience to be interactive?

Engagement

Heath (2007) defines *level of engagement* as “the amount of subconscious ‘feeling’ going on when an advertisement is being processed.” Or, as Aaker & Smith stated, engagement is “truly making people feel emotionally connected to helping you achieve your goals” through storytelling, authenticity and establishing a personal connection. (quoted in Singer, 2011, p. 1).

Hill (2010) also points to storytelling as a form of engagement (p.114). A good story can deliver emotionally and when that happens, whatever the story may be, it becomes reality

to its followers (p. 115). This occurs, in part, because a story “doesn’t reside in facts; it resides in faith, enjoyment and ease of connection” (p. 116).

Consequently, storytelling makes for a good tool to build brand. Hill (2010) advocates storytelling with the recommendation for brands “to reinforce their brand stories by creating mental landscapes rich in associations” (p. 120), and this, because associations can conjure up mental imagery that are familiar and comforting.

Some advertisers may interpret this as nostalgic storytelling in advertisements. In fact, Muehling & Sprott (2004) found that while nostalgic advertisements are occasionally negative, audience exposure to a nostalgic ad “yielded more favorable attitudes toward the advertisement and advertised brand.” The same was true otherwise.

Richter-Levin & Akirav (2003) attributes this to the *emotional tagging* concept, whereby “the emotional weight of the experience activates the amygdala, which is responsible for the activation of cellular and molecular mechanisms that tag the experience as important and enhance its consolidation.”

Similarly, Green & Brock (2000) found that in public narratives, narrative transportation, which is “a mechanism whereby narratives can affect beliefs and entails imagery, affect and attentional focus ... the highly transported readers found fewer false notes in a story than less-transported readers.” Escalas (2004) agrees with Green & Brock and also discovered that a mentally simulated audience engages in narrative processing, thus transporting them towards a positive affect that influences the audience’s attitude toward the ad and evaluations of a brand in a favorable manner.

Narrative transportation can be via achieved self-referencing stories or auto-biographical memories. Advertisements that use auto-biographical memories tended to

have greater affect on its audience. The positive affect subsequently reduced the audience's analysis of a product and distracted the audience from memorizing product information. Auto-biographical memories did influence brand evaluation by associating the memory with the brand advertised (Sujan, Bettman & Baumgartner, 1993).

Storytelling goes digital

One such form of self-referencing or autobiographical storytelling is digital storytelling. But what is digital storytelling? This research considers the Center for Digital Storytelling [CDS] as the authority on digital storytelling. The late Dana Atchley, co-founder of the Center for Digital Storytelling, recognized that there was so much more to storytelling than what was readily available in broadcast media. Thus, CDS developed a workshop model for digital storytelling and taught the first three digital storytelling workshops to documentary filmmakers at the American Film Institute in Los Angeles, California in 1993 ("The evolution of," n.d.). Hartley & McWilliam (2009) observe:

As an art form, digital storytelling "combines the direct, emotional charge of confessional disclosure, the authenticity of the documentary, and the simple elegance of the format – it is a digital sonnet, or haiku." As a practice, digital storytelling "combines tuition of the individual with new narrative devices for multiplatform digital publishing across hybrid sites." As a movement, it is "one of the first genuine amalgamations of expert and consumer or user-led creativity."

Digital storytelling, which is fundamentally "the recorded voice of the storyteller telling their story," has seven steps (Lambert, 2010, p. 9) that guide the digital storyteller along the production process. Anyone can be a digital storyteller as long as there is a

desire to tell his or her stories through digital media, irrespective of prior media experience (Center for Digital Storytelling, (n.d.)).

In digital storytelling, Lambert (2010) contends that the two major types of stories people tell are of change, either to themselves or of themselves. These are common themes in people's lives and audiences have an affinity for such stories because people are generally changing or looking for change, and thus are able to relate to similarly themed stories (p. 14). Furthermore, the setting of the scene through digital storytelling engages the audience and empowers them with tools to construe the story in their own unique ways.

Simmons (2006, p. 3) has explicitly argued that people want to trust and to be confident in someone instead of just receiving information. She believes:

People value their own conclusions more highly than [others']. They will only have faith in a story that has become real for them personally. Once people make your story, their story, you have tapped into the powerful force of faith. Future influence will require very little follow-up energy from you and may even expand as people recall and retell your story to others.

Authenticity

Digital storytelling's distinct quality is its authenticity. It is narrative in the first-person, and usually integrated with other authentic forms of media such as pictures from the family album or home videos from the family archive. The stories portray genuine emotions from real life events (Wu, 2009).

The value of authenticity cannot be undermined. People do not like to be deceived by advertising gimmicks. Case in point is Sony's PlayStation Portable (PSP)

marketing strategy in late 2006. Sony's and its marketing agency, Zipatoni's fraudulent activities were exposed before Christmas. They posed as a regular blogger who was a big fan of the Sony PSP (Weaver, 2006). After being exposed, Sony immediately removed the fake blog and the YouTube videos. The company posted an apology on the fake blog but it could not stop a 75 percent year-on-year decline in Sony's holiday shipments that year (Barwise & Meehan, 2010).

Guber (2011) strongly advocates authentic storytelling because when the emotional component of storytelling bonds with the content or information aspect of the story being told, the result is "memorable, resonant and actionable." He further explains that it is equally important to be interested in your audience as when the connection is made between storyteller and audience, the latter will take ownership of the former's story and have the potential to become *viral advocates* of the story. This phenomenon is described as *emotional transportation*.

Singer (2011) says storytelling with the use of still and moving images can help create empathy within an audience and thus, the more authentic you are, the easier it is for an audience to connect with both, you and your cause. Aaker believes a good story must have a strong beginning and end as well as a point of conflict. Aaker also says this under-utilized tool is more memorable, and recyclable to the point of being infectious. It is better than simple anecdotes and can promote community building (quoted in Singer, 2011, p. 4). Above all, storytelling is effective because it focuses on the people and not the technology (p. 6).

Conclusion

Marketing and advertising have undergone dramatic changes in the last few years. In essence, the game has not changed because companies are still trying to build brand and are actively disseminating information about their products and services. But the rules have changed. Social media has tipped the balance in favor of consumers. In order for companies to maintain their customer base, they have to continuously engage their consumers and interact with them. The literature review identified social media as a way to promote interactivity and storytelling as a powerful form of engagement. Yet, the question remains, are companies taking existing research and using these findings to enhance their competitive advantage?

Motivated by Toyota Motor Corporation's public relations disaster and its efforts to salvage what was left of their battered pride, this research analyzes three automobile companies, namely Ford Motor Company, Mercedes-Benz USA and Toyota Motor Corporation to examine their use of social media and digital storytelling to enhance their company's competitive advantage.

This research is designed to critically analyze and provide answers to the following research questions:

RQ1) Are these automobile companies engaging their audience?

RQ2) Are these automobile companies interacting with their audience?

RQ3) Are these automobile companies effectively engaging and interacting with their audiences over multiple platforms simultaneously?

Chapter 3: Methodology

When Toyota Motor Corporation [Toyota] found itself in an undesirable position in the first quarter of 2010 because of a poor public relations strategy and supposed concealment of sensitive information regarding the safety quality of its fleet of vehicles, it moved against the tide by regrouping quickly and selling harder. It was rather unconventional because people are expected to take time to accept bad news and an immediate sales pitch is feared likely to confuse people. Moreover, it may have given the impression that Toyota was making light of the issue by not displaying a more passive, and remorseful stance (“New Toyota ads”, 2010).

Toyota had different ideas. It chose to salvage the remnants of its once stellar reputation by tapping into its loyal customer base. In the process, it collected thousands of personal stories from its customers and produced a few of these professionally for mass consumption. Toyota used digital storytelling in a bid to bond with its existing consumers and engage a new audience. Toyota employed the use of social media to interact with existing and potential consumers as well as monitor conversations about the Toyota brand in the cyber world.

Toyota’s marketing communications strategy reflects marketing’s shift from product-centricity to consumer-centricity. Businesses, be it large corporations or small, and medium businesses, are now pressed to find ways to effectively reach out to

consumers. The simple reason for this is the advancements in technology have enabled consumers in an unprecedented way. The Internet in particular is forcing marketers to abandon some old practices while adopting new methods of engagement, including through the use of social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter. Indeed, more and more people are connected via these channels. As such, many businesses are jumping on the social media bandwagon and placing their brand on the World Wide Web.

Unfortunately, this is where businesses falter. Presence on social media networks does not equate to interactivity and engagement with consumers. WongDoody, a marketing ideas agency, conducted a study of the top 100 brands in the Interbrands Best Global Brands 2010 rankings and found that 84% of these brands are present on Facebook. However, WongDoody suggested that these brands are not making the most of their Facebook presence, in the sense that the brands are not engaging their consumers enough (Walsh, 2011).

This is a terrible waste as social media networks provide opportunities and a platform for interactivity as well as direct engagement with consumers. The key to engagement is content that compels people to pay attention to and share with their friends. This content can be in the form of text, still and moving images, audio and many more (Lee, 2011).

This research seeks to examine how three automobile companies are using social media and digital storytelling to interact with and engage an audience. The approach will be qualitative. The specific methods used are thematic analysis and multi-platform

interactivity analysis, which was derived from the literature reviewed in the previous chapter.

The methods chosen are both qualitative but together grant the research some allowances in deducing the research conclusions. Tesch (1990) describes “manipulating qualitative data during analysis [as] an eclectic activity.” Brock, Scott & Chesebro (1989) said, the “eclectic approach stresses the critic’s ability to assemble and absorb ways of working, subordinating these to the task at hand.” Furthermore, “when the eclectic critic does use a method, it is an ‘open-ended’ one that does not force or prescribe a specific and provides the critic with a great deal of creative decision making” (p. 91).

Thematic Analysis

Braun & Clarke (2006) define *thematic analysis* as a “method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail.” (p. 96) This research uses thematic analysis to study the use of language and words in personal stories as advertisements. This research hopes to break down the different parts of the texts and moving images analyzed to draw a larger, comprehensive report (p. 97), in relation to the research questions posed in the earlier chapter. In this sense, thematic analysis is not just a delineation of the content of advertisement; thematic analysis seeks to identify the potential means of advertisements by reconfiguring them (i.e., the traditional “interpretation” stage in a critical analysis), especially when an alternative or unexpected audience or audience effect might be involved.

Specifically, this research analyzes advertisements produced by three automobile companies, namely Toyota Motor Corporation [Toyota], Mercedes Benz USA [Mercedes] and Ford Motor Company [Ford]. These advertisements were chosen because they all feature actual consumers of the respective brands, they were all launched in the year 2010, and they were personal or unscripted. All three companies also used these consumer stories for branding purposes; either to restore, reinforce or reaffirm. Complete transcripts of these advertisements are included in Appendix A.

The first step is to determine if these qualify as stories. This will be achieved by testing for the presence or absence of the following categories: setting, character, plot, conflict, and resolution.

Next, thematic analysis will be used to identify the appropriate language and phrases to describe the companies' respective themes. This includes the use of direct or indirect references to each brand's value propositions. Based on the purpose of the advertisements, the following themes were derived from the respective campaign missions:

Brand	Theme (Campaign / Series Name)
Ford	Features Owners Like (One More Reason – Drive One)
Mercedes	Survival / Safety (Impact)
Toyota	Longevity / Time (Auto-biography)

Subsequent to that, this research will study the affect extraction of each advertisement. Key phrases that specifically reference the value proposition of each company using affective language, or languages describing emotions, will be identified.

The key phrases used must be expressive of the direct emotional relationship between the car and the consumer, that is, how the car made them feel. These phrases will be analyzed parallel to the themes motivating these campaign commercials.

Finally, an analysis of the moving image is conducted to supplement or complement the findings from the thematic analysis above.

The results of the thematic analysis above is expected to answer the first research question.

In the final stage of the thematic analysis (where critics normally provide an evaluation of their object of study), the thematic analysis employed here is used to test the Facebook Pages of Toyota, Mercedes and Ford for its ability to promote interactivity. Each company's Facebook Page will be observed. First, the Facebook Pages will be evaluated using categories that are adapted from Benoit & Benoit's (2005) criteria for evaluating political campaign webpages. The specific categories employed by this research are Identification, Navigation, Irritability, Information Accessibility, Interest Level, Information Breadth and Depth, Support, Adapted to Audience, and Interactive. The subcategories and their definitions are provided for in Appendix B.

On top of that, this analysis determines and actually counts the number of new Page owner and user Wall posts, the number of likes attracted by the respective Wall posts and the number of comments in response to the Wall posts within each day. This analysis is conducted from March 1, 2011 to March 14, 2011 at 2330 hours. Wall posts that appear after 2330 hours are considered in the following day's record. At the same time, the number of people who Like each Page are noted.

In these ways, thematic analysis is employed because it can mimic some of the features of the social scientists' use of content analysis. Indeed, paralleling the ways in which content analysis is actually described, thematic analysis was chosen to analyze the social media platforms, as it is "a way less prone to subjective selectiveness and idiosyncrasies" (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine & Newbold, 1998, p. 91). And, while they are specifically discussing content analysis, the functional analysis of content analysis provided by Hansen et al. (1998) also applies to this use of thematic analysis, for as Hansen and his colleagues have explained "the purpose of the method is to identify and count occurrences of specified characteristics or dimensions of texts, and through this, to be able to say something about the messages, images, representations of such texts and their wider social significance" (p. 95).

This mode of analysis is therefore expected to answer the second research question.

Multiple Interactivities Analysis

This research defines a multiple interactivities analysis as a form of testing a company's website, and other sites under the purview of the same company for interactivity within and among the sites. For this research, it is performed using pre-established categories that fit the notion of such communication.

These categories are developed based on the literature review in the previous chapter. This research examines the ease of interactivity within and among its corporate website, Facebook profile, and the site that invites and enables consumers to share their stories. The websites were identified as follows:

1. Ford - *The Ford Story*
(<http://www.thefordstory.com>)
2. Mercedes - *Mercedes Impact*
(<http://www.mbusa.com/impact>)
3. Toyota - *Toyota Auto-biography Facebook Campaign*
(<http://www.facebook.com/toyota>)

The criterion for this analysis was based on the dimensions of interactivity, as well as the modified basics of interactivity adapted from Yacci (2000). The categories will consider interactivity from the consumer's and the company's points of view, such as 'does the Facebook Page enable users to comment?' and 'does the Page owner respond to Wall posts by people who Like the Page?'

The results of this analysis are expected to answer the third research question.

Conclusion

This research blends thematic analysis with a multi-platform interactivity analysis as it seeks answers to the research questions in the previous chapter. The first research question (RQ 1) will be answered via thematic analysis. The second research question (RQ 2) will also use thematic analysis while the third research question (RQ 3) will employ the multi-platform interactivity analysis, which is based on the literature reviewed in the previous chapter.

Each method will examine, explore, dissect and reveal how Toyota Motor Corporation, Ford Motor Company and Mercedes-Benz USA have taken advantage of

social media, digital storytelling and the utility of multiple platforms to reach its desired audience. The findings of this research are detailed in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter will present the findings of the research methods employed in the previous chapter to answer the three research questions introduced in chapter two. The findings will be presented based on the order the research questions appear. First, the findings for engagement will be detailed via thematic analysis of digital stories. Second, the findings for interactivity will be presented based on the thematic analysis method. Third, the companies will be examined on their use of multiple platforms using a multiple interactivities analysis, particularly between the corporate website, Facebook profile, and one additional external site promoting a campaign recently initiated by the respective companies. The external sites promoting a company campaign that will be studied were identified as *The Ford Story*, *Mercedes Benz Impact*, and *Toyota Auto-biography Facebook campaign*.

RQ1: Are these automobile companies engaging their audience?

Each advertisement was first tested to determine if it meets the basic elements of a story. Ford Motor Company [Ford] had zero advertisements that met the criterion. All seven of Mercedes-Benz USA's [Mercedes] advertisements satisfied the basic elements of a story. Only four out of the six Toyota Motor Corporation [Toyota] advertisements tested, satisfied the basic elements of a story. A more detailed listing of results for this test can be found in Appendix C.

Thematic analysis

After filtering out those advertisements that do not satisfy the basic elements of a story, thematic analysis was applied to identify the appropriate language and phrases that describe the companies' respective themes, as outlined in the previous chapter. The key phrases and / or words used to describe each brand based on the theme of their campaigns are marked in bold in *Table 1* and *Table 2*.

Table 1

Key phrase(s) used to describe Mercedes' Survival / Safety Ratings.

Title	Author	Key Phrases Describing Survival / Safety
Crushed By A Truck	Laurie Brill	Hands down, I will never drive anything but a Mercedes. ... It saved my life.
A Baby Named Crash	Carla Kok	...we decided that we should get a safer car when that made sense, and we picked the Mercedes S 63.
The "What If" Game	Dan Kennedy	... there was definitely that, that cage that my body was supposed to be in and be protected in and, and it worked .
A Pick-Up Flips Onto the Roof	Angela Logan	...when I went to duck, [the airbags] all kinda, kinda protected me and just kinda like say, kinda encapsulated me.
Not Through Yet	Steve Phillips	Whatever is in the front end, design engineering design, took the energy from that collision .
Dragged By An 18-Wheeler	Christine Favaro	The car never gave up . And the car stood its ground, on four wheels .
In A Drunk Driver's Path	Joe Miller	The automatic roll bars shot up, broke the, the convertible roof, the whole back of the car crumpled up, and, um, we got out . But the car did exactly as it was designed.

Table 2

Key phrase(s) used to describe Toyota's vehicle reliability.

Title	Author	Key Phrases Describing Longevity / Passage of Time
The Duck Mobile	Jen Mulder	My Camry now has 258,000 miles on it.
The Green Machine	Dave Rodriguez	We took a lot of road trips in that green machine ... some 365,000 miles later, my kids are grown, on their own in college, and they drive around in their own Toyotas now.
The Midnight Snack	Jimmy Hinton	After fixing [my Toyota], I drove it for about a year and sold it to my brother with over 300,000 miles on it.
The Road Test	Drew Arthur	And so I got the Corolla because all my other cars had crapped out on me. ... We were huge on road trips .

Not one of the stories uses the word Toyota or related words more than 2.87 percent of the narrative. In other words, for every 100 words of the narrative, 'Toyota' and its related words, are mentioned less than three times. Not all the stories had a clear beginning, middle and end. The stories range from fifty-six seconds (0:56) to one and a half (1:30) minutes long.

All seven Mercedes stories have more than one indirect reference to Mercedes' safety ratings. Four out of seven stories do not mention Mercedes or related words throughout the story. The other three that do mention Mercedes do so less than 1 percent of the time, based on word count. Each storyteller narrated his or her story in chronological order, with a clear beginning, middle and end. Mercedes explicitly stated on its website that the stories were not scripted. The stories range in time between three minutes, 11 seconds (3:11) and 5 minutes, 42 seconds (5:42).

Subsequently, a thematic analysis was employed to study the affect extraction of each advertisement. The criteria set for this analysis is that the phrases used must be expressive of the direct emotional relationship between the car and the consumer, parallel to theme of the company's campaign.

Table 3

Affect Extraction Phrases in Toyota's Commercials.

Title	Affect Extraction Phrases
The Duck Mobile	1. He was so proud of his new purchase. ... When it became mine, that was another awesome day. 2. I have lots of favorite memories in the Camry. 3. It definitely keeps me in good spirits as well.
The Big Hill	1. It is a 1,200-foot climb on the windiest road you can imagine and most of it is dirt road, which I am really impressed with my Corolla, because it gets me there.
The Midnight Snack	1. ...my car had been broken into by the bear, ripped into the back door, got in, ripped the back seat apart and got into the trunk of the car. The joke became that my car got eaten by a bear.
The Road Test	1. But now that I have my Corolla, I feel more like an adult.

Table 4

Affect Extraction Phrases in Mercedes' Commercials.

Title	Affect Extraction Phrases
Crushed By A Truck	1. [If I had been in any other car] God, I'd have nothing. Nothing. 2. Hands down, I will never drive anything but a Mercedes. I mean, it saved my life.
A Baby Named Crash	1. We came real close to losing Carla and the baby and I know that we feel in our heart that car, that Mercedes big S-class sedan, um, saved her life. 2. I want the exact same car.
The "What If" Game	1. We all checked out fine. ...to be in that car and to be that safe; we couldn't believe it. 2. We were, at the wrong place, at the wrong time. But we were in the right car. We were in the right car.
A Pick-Up Flips Onto the Roof	1. ...there was a possibility like I said if it had been in another car, her mother may not have been ok. 2. I'm just glad that she was in something that protected her.
Not Through Yet	1. We're, I can't believe it, we're ok. 2. After this accident, the only car [my daughter] is allowed to drive is my car or my husband has an E-Class. She can take whichever Mercedes she wants.
Dragged By An 18-Wheeler	1. You'll get some friends and some of your family members saying, oh, what do you need that car for? That's why I need that car.
In A Drunk Driver's Path	1. That's the only thing you've got going for you - is the car you're in.

As for the moving image, Toyota used animation to make its stories visual. The imagery used literally represented the narrative. The colors used in the animation are mostly cool colors. The characters chosen to represent the narrators range from human-like, to animal-like. None of the commercials sells the cars' features explicitly. All the stories ended with a signature introduction by the narrators and them signing off saying, 'And this is my Toyota Auto-biography.'

On the other hand, Mercedes used the actual storytellers thus, could employ video techniques such as panning, zooming in and zooming out, close-ups and wide shots. Mercedes used wide shots to highlight the familial relationships in the story. Mercedes used images of the wrecks to trigger the narrator's emotions. They zoomed in, taking close-up shots to capture the storyteller's emotional facial expressions. Almost all the stories were filmed on sets that look like homes. One digital story was filmed at the scene of the accident. The narrators used very descriptive words throughout the narrative.

Analysis

"They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel."

~ Carl Buechner

Toyota and Mercedes used digital stories as a way to engage their audience and to build their brand. Ford's *One More Reason* series used actual Ford consumers but they sold features instead of selling experiences through storytelling. Comparing Toyota's digital stories versus Ford's *One More Reason* series, the former captured a much greater audience in a shorter amount of time based on the number of views recorded on YouTube. Toyota's Auto-biographies that were launched at the end of 2010 have had more than 30,000 views. The majority of Ford's *One More Reason* series have recorded less than 10,000 views.

I infer that this is the case because Toyota's stories made a point. The storytelling approach gave it an advantage in terms of content. Based on the literature review, when stories have content and make a point, these stories are better able to create an emotional connection with its audience.

The use of real consumers lent a hand in the authenticity of Toyota's and Mercedes' commercials. Coupling the stories with the use of still and moving images helped create empathy within the audience. Authenticity and empathy create connections between the storyteller and the audience because the focus is removed from the technology and focused on the people (Guber, 2011; Singer, 2011; Wu, 2009).

One may argue that while Mercedes' digital stories may have had better production value, it did not attract the same kind of attention that Toyota's digital stories did. I offer two opinions why this is so. First, Mercedes' *Impact* series were twice as long as Toyota's longest Auto-biography. Second, Toyota's Auto-biographies were hosted on a platform that already had a large and willing audience. The interactive platform also promoted active participation from its audience. Considering the burst of activity in user-generated content and the exponential growth of Facebook, Toyota took advantage of the two most popular forms of social media.

Thus, it would seem that Toyota and Mercedes have taken advantage of storytelling as a means to engage its audience as compared with Ford. Toyota's value proposition, in particular, was that it was trying something unprecedented among other automobile companies (Petrecca, 2007).

RQ2: Are these automobile companies interacting with their audience?

Thematic analysis was used to test for interactivity by first describing the elements of each company's Facebook Pages, using Benoit & Benoit's (2005) criteria for evaluating political web pages. The purpose was to determine if the basic elements of the Facebook Pages promoted interactivity. As Facebook Pages have a social context, certain criteria were adapted to reflect that.

Table 5 details the criteria that exhibited differences in general elements among the three automobile companies. At the start of this research, for the first criteria, *Identification*, Mercedes was the only company that did not include contact information such as its corporate website address or customer service representative contact numbers in the Information Box on the left side of the Facebook Page. It was observed that soon after this research began, Ford and Toyota adopted Facebook's new layout, which is cleaner and clearer but did not provide contact information on the first page.

Table 5

Differences in general design elements of the Facebook profiles

CRITERIA	FORD	MERCEDES	TOYOTA
IDENTIFICATION			
Contact Information In "Information" Box	YES	NO	YES
NAVIGATION			
Menus Clear, Limited to 5 - 7 "Pages"	NO	NO	YES
IRRITABILITY			
Frames Used Effectively	NO	YES	YES
INFORMATION ACCESSIBILITY			
How Information is Subdivided	YES	NO	YES

Under navigation, Toyota had the maximum number of recommended pages for easy navigation, which in this case, is eight. They were also all clearly laid out on the left panel of the company's Facebook Page. Mercedes had ten pages and Ford offered 14 pages. For the most part, Ford used the frames effectively except for one page, entitled "Ford at CAS," whereby the picture used was too large for the small frame, thus half of the image file was not legible to the user (*Figure 1*).

In terms of subdivision of the information, Mercedes offers a Welcome page that does not appear as its homepage. It also has two video pages that don't distinguish one

from the other, although the videos showcased are different (*Figure 2*). Among the three automobile companies, Ford was the only one that did not use digital storytelling, based on the Center for Digital Storytelling model. On the other hand, it was the only one that included a short biography of the company on its Info page (*Table 6*).

Mercedes did not include any biographical information. Instead, it listed salient information such as the location of its headquarters in New Jersey, the primary role of the company in the United States and the products it offers, contrary to the listing of the other two companies. It also did not have a mission statement but used the feature to thank its visitors and advise caution against inappropriate postings.

Table 6

General content elements of the Facebook profiles.

CRITERIA	FORD	MERCEDES	TOYOTA
INTEREST LEVEL			
Use of Digital Storytelling	NO	YES	YES
INFORMATION BREADTH AND DEPTH			
Biography	YES	NO	NO
Philosophy / Mission / Vision Statement	YES	NO	YES

Ford had the most elements that could be used to promote interactivity (*Table 7*) on its Facebook Page. It features polls and its ‘other favorite pages,’ as well as enables group members to post on its Wall, upload multimedia, share links, and respond to polls. Ford also provides a platform for discussion among its users.

Table 7

General elements to promote interactivity on the Facebook profiles.

CRITERIA	FORD	MERCEDES	TOYOTA
SUPPORT			
Favorite Pages	YES	NO	YES
INTERACTIVE			
Opportunity to Provide Wall Post	YES	NO	YES
Control Over User-Generated Content	NO	YES	NO
Upload Photos/Videos	YES	NO	YES
Share Links	YES	NO	YES
Encourage Internet Poll Voting	YES	NO	YES
Discussion Room	YES	NO	NO
Order Company Merchandise	NO	YES	NO

facebook

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[Sign Up](#) **Ford Motor Company is on Facebook**
Sign up for Facebook to connect with Ford Motor Company.

Ford Motor Company [Like](#)

[Wall](#) [Info](#) [Livestream](#) [Photos](#) [Video](#) [Poll](#) [»](#)

Information

Founded:
June 16, 1903 by Henry Ford

About:
If you have a complaint or issue with your vehicle we want to help, but we can't do it here. Please contact us in the U.S. at: 800-392-3673 or visit:
<http://corporate.ford.com/owner-services/customer-support/contact-ford>

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2010 NYIAS Press Conference
3-31-10
10:30 a.m. EST

Chic Pres
2-10

Figure 1. Screen shot of “Ford at CAS” page. This figure illustrates Ford’s page that was not properly framed.

Note. From <http://www.facebook.com/ford>.

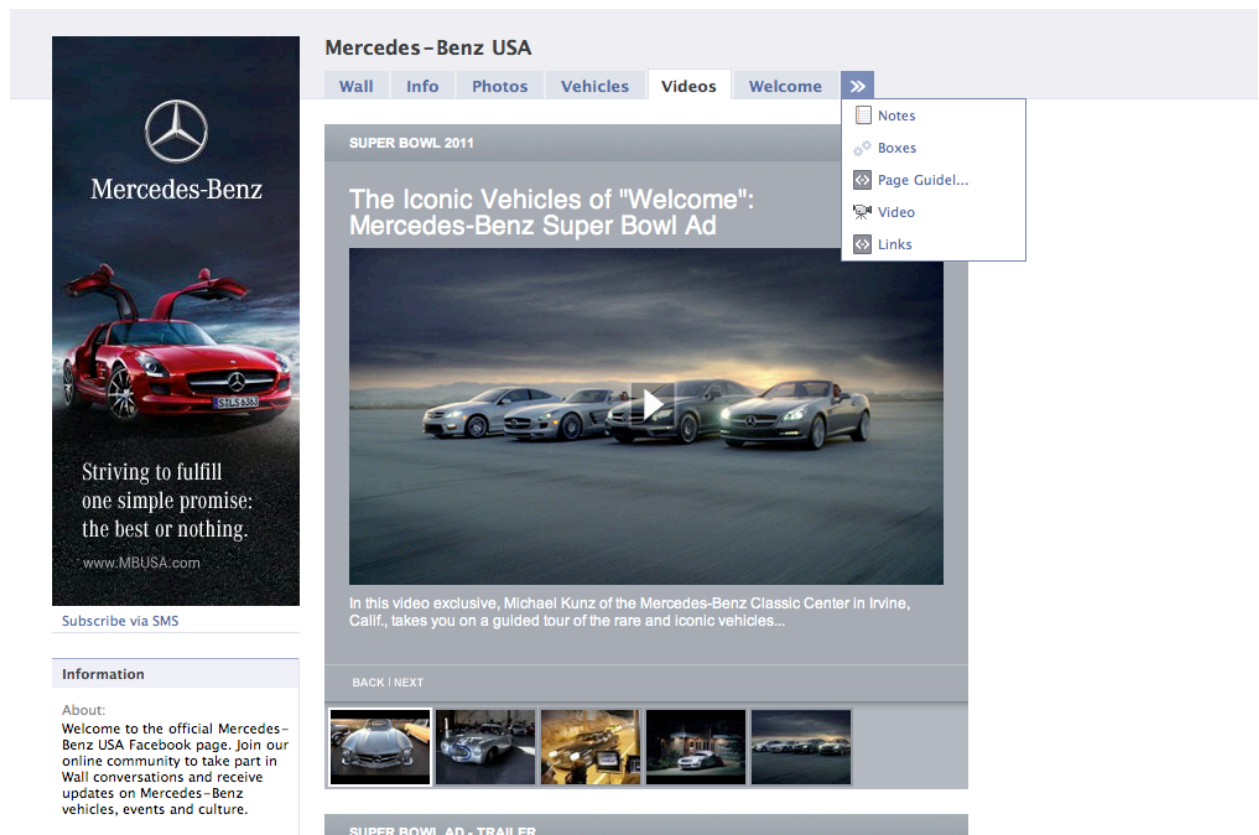


Figure 2. Screen shot of Mercedes' Page. This figure illustrates Mercedes' Facebook profile with the menu clearly showing two "Video(s)" pages.

Toyota enables its users to have active control in terms of the ability to post on the company's Wall, upload photos and videos, share links and respond to poll questions. Further to that, Toyota allowed its Page visitors to upload their Toyota stories. As of March 14, 2011, Toyota has more than 11,000 text-based stories contributed by its visitors. The stories are brief, accompanied by still images and usually have the number of miles the vehicle has run.

Mercedes is the most controlling of the three companies examined. It does not allow the users to initiate any form of interaction or conversation. In fact, it controls

user-generated content by disabling the Wall post feature for other users and the upload functions for visitors to the site. It differentiates itself from Ford and Toyota by dedicating a page to its fleet of vehicles, with links for prospective Mercedes buyers to easily find Mercedes dealerships. This research interpreted this as the ability to ‘order company merchandise.’

Ford outperformed Mercedes and Toyota based on the number of people who Like its Facebook page, as well as the number of messages and responses its Facebook Page records every day. The Facebook data was collected from March 1, 2011 through to March 14, 2011. *Figure 3* shows the daily increase in the number of people who Like the respective companies’ Facebook Pages. Generally, Ford recorded significantly higher increases on a daily basis compared with Toyota and Mercedes. *Table 8* shows the average amount of activity on each company’s Facebook Page.

Analysis

Based on the figure and table above, it is fair to say that Ford has been the most successful in interacting with its audience. The growth in the number of people who Like Ford’s Facebook Page far exceeds even the sum total of Mercedes and Toyota. What sets Ford apart from the other two is its active Wall posts. On March 4, 2011, Ford posted this on its Wall: “How does driving your Ford make you feel? What do you drive?” A question prompts answers and as a result, this Wall post received more than 1,000 comments in return within one day.

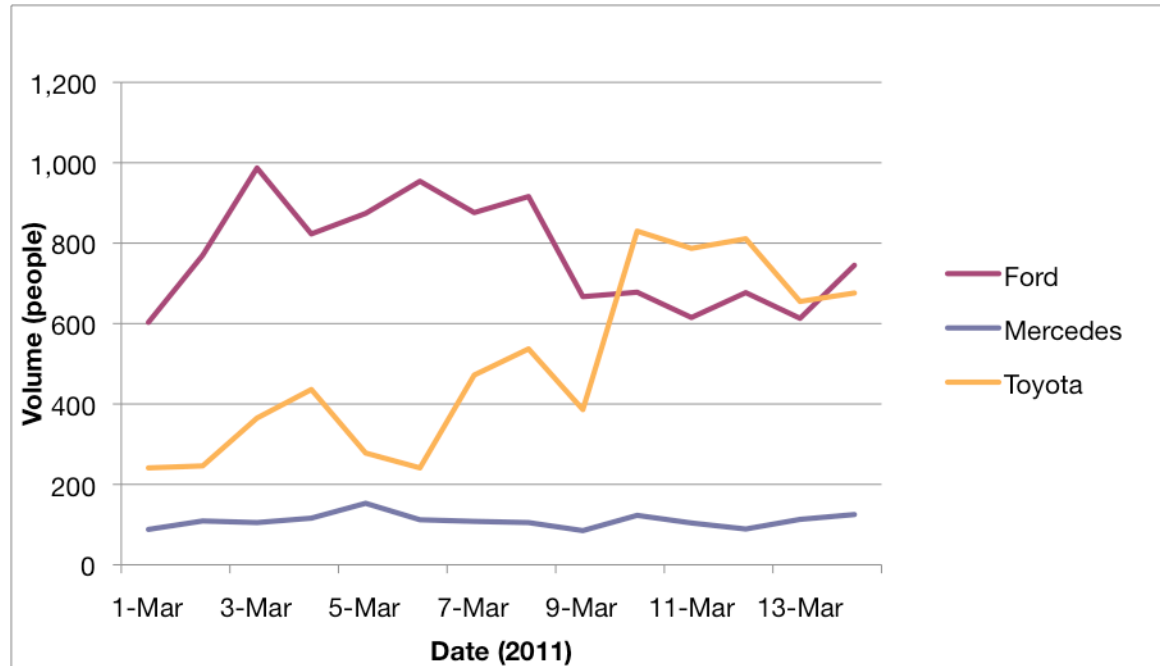


Figure 3. Increase in people who “Like” Facebook Page. This figure illustrates the daily growth in the number of new people who “Like” a company’s Facebook Page.

Table 8

Average Amount of Activity on Facebook Pages From March 1 – March 14, 2011

AVERAGE NUMBER OF:	FORD	MERCEDES	TOYOTA
New People Who Like	771	110	497
Wall Posts by Owner	2	1	1
Wall Posts by People Who Like	59	0	48
Like for Posts by Owner	494	209	174
Like for Posts by People Who Like	45	0	43
Comments on Posts by Owner	294	23	24
Comments on Posts by People Who Like	53	0	45

Meanwhile, Toyota posted on its Wall an average of once a day. However, Toyota was noticeably absent for certain periods during this research and its absence from any activity on its Facebook Page was duly noted by one of the people who Like Toyota (*Figure 4*).

This behavior is justified based on the adaptation of Yacci's (2000) exposition of the four basics of interactivity. As laid out in the literature review, interactivity is a message loop that only occurs when the loop *from* and *back* to the consumer has been completed. In the case of social media, it was observed that this loop does not have to move from and directly back to the same consumer. It is sufficient to know that the Page owner is present through Wall posts and occasionally posting comments and Likes.



Figure 4. Screenshot of Toyota Consumer's Wall Post. This figure illustrates Toyota's absence being noted by a Toyota Facebook Page fan.

This also goes to show that mere presence on social media networks does not equate to interactivity. Ford has totally embraced the realm of social media compared with Toyota and Mercedes. It is understandable why Ford boasts more than 560,000 followers versus Toyota's 345,000 and Mercedes' 97,000 followers. Indeed, the data seems to suggest a direct relationship between interactivity and the number of people who Like a Facebook Page.

RQ3: Are these automobile companies effectively engaging and interacting with their audiences over multiple platforms simultaneously?

These findings will take on three different perspectives for each company's analysis. First, is the look at interactivity and engagement on an organizational level. This research will consider the ease with which one can move from website to website gathering information about Ford and its fleet of vehicles. Next, it looks at the relationship between the company and the user, from the user's point of view. Finally, the research takes on the view of the company.

Ford Motor Company

Starting from the corporate website, it was immediately noticed that there was no Facebook link on Ford's homepage. There is, however, a link to *The Ford Story* website. Ford's Facebook Page has links to both sites via its *Information* page. *The Ford Story* page has neither links to the corporate website nor Ford's Facebook page on its homepage. However, *The Ford Story* gives you the option to share any stories, images or videos on that site with other people via Facebook.

Ford updates its Facebook page at least three times in a day via Wall posts. Ford allows its Facebook followers to upload images and videos as well as share what they

Like with other users. Ford rarely responds by commenting or Liking Wall posts by users. It does not filter anything that appears on its Facebook Page. Apart from the link in its *Information* page, Ford drives traffic to *The Ford Story* by sharing articles through Wall posts that are on *The Ford Story*.

The Ford Story invites users to submit their text-based personal stories, still and moving images formats. This site houses articles, images and videos of the Ford fleet. None of the consumer stories seem to have been chosen and produced professionally by Ford. Some of the videos on *The Ford Story* have links to the Ford website at the end, and others do not. *The Ford Story* has also been used as a platform for some of Ford's latest news, such as the introduction of the *One More Reason* series and its subsequent updates. It also has a link to more images on *Flickr*, a photo sharing website and more videos on YouTube.

Mercedes-Benz USA

Mercedes' corporate website has the Facebook icon on every page, including the homepage. Before it launched its latest mobile application, *mbrace*, it had a link to the *Mercedes Impact* stories on the homepage. The Facebook Page has links back to the corporate website but no prominent link to the *Mercedes Impact* website, although Mercedes did publish a Wall post directing traffic to the stories when they were first launched in October 2010.

Mercedes' Facebook Page has disabled Wall posts by people who Like the Page. They are also not allowed to upload photos nor videos. However, they can comment on and Like Mercedes' Wall posts. There is a link to the *Mercedes Impact* website in the *Boxes* page. The text-based stories that appear in the *Boxes* page have not been updated

since October 11, 2010. On the other hand, Mercedes started another Facebook Page dedicated to the Mercedes-Benz Community. This Page enables users to do everything that the Mercedes-Benz Facebook Page does not. Mercedes' Facebook Page also provides a convenient link to contact information for its dealerships through its *Vehicles* page.

The *Mercedes Impact* website has a link to Like the page on Facebook, to share your own story with Mercedes, and to share the story with others. The seven stories featured all appear as icons on the homepage. Upon selecting a story, the video will play. Users have the option of finding out a little more about the people in the story by clicking the '*More on this story*' link. These links have more information about the digital storyteller, the accident, and / or the vehicle involved. There have not been any new digital stories since the launch of the branding campaign.

Toyota Motor Corporation

Toyota's corporate website does not have any links to its Facebook Page nor to its Auto-biography Facebook campaign. But its Facebook Page does have links to both. The Auto-biography Facebook campaign is a page within its Facebook Page, yet it has a link back to the corporate website when someone has entered the page and is watching the digital stories. It also has a link to go back to the Toyota USA Facebook Page and opens up a new window when clicked.

Toyota's Facebook Page is open to the people who Like it to post on the Wall, upload still and moving images. Toyota seldom updated its Wall but would occasionally Like or comment on a user's comment. When the Page owner was inactive for a while

on its Wall, a user made a comment on it. Subsequently, someone from Toyota's Facebook Page immediately responded to that Wall post.

The digital stories for the Toyota Auto-biography Facebook campaign were chosen and produced professionally. Each of the Toyota Auto-biography digital stories end with a link to the Facebook page. While the stories introduce each digital storyteller, no further information about them is available, nor are actual pictures of them and their Toyotas. However, the campaign has successfully attracted more than 10,000 stories from consumers. While the majority of the stories are in favor of Toyota, there are a number that are otherwise.

Analysis

In a knowledge society, information is king. Thus, companies strive to disseminate information everywhere on the Internet. They use different platforms to serve the same purpose. Companies try to be everywhere. But they accomplish that in an inefficient way and inadvertently waste valuable resources.

Of the three companies examined, Mercedes seems to have pooled its resources best. The three related websites observed were all inter-linked in dual directions. The links directing to each website are clear and purposeful. It is organized, attractive and professional, in line with the image it portrays as a luxury vehicle. While it was found lacking in terms of interactivity on its Facebook Page, Mercedes makes up for it by providing a separate, more flexible Facebook Page that is dedicated to the Mercedes-Benz community. This gives the user active control to interact with the brand yet enables Mercedes to preserve the integrity of the brand.

Toyota and Ford did not adopt the same strategy and some third parties have taken advantage of the two companies' large base of followers to advertise their products unrelated and unendorsed by either Toyota or Ford. Whether or not this can hurt the brand, remains to be observed. But if the trend continues, it will most likely be a detriment to the company.

To that effect, I surmise that Mercedes is the company most effectively utilizing its virtual assets or real estate, including over multiple platforms simultaneously. The architecture of its corporate and Mercedes *Impact* websites, together with its Facebook Page was very well planned. The seamless navigation from one site to the next for different information and videos makes for a good overall online experience.

Conclusion

Upon the conclusion of this research, it was interesting to note that each company had its own strength in terms of engagement, interactivity with the user and interactivity among multiple platforms. It also goes to show that mere presence online and on social media networks does not indicate interactivity nor engagement. All in all, for marketing strategy success, it would be helpful to consider all three elements explored in this research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This research has examined the interactivity and engagement of three automobile companies through the corporate websites, Facebook Pages, and a third page dedicated to a particular cause or campaign that the company adopted.

The findings suggest that companies do one thing or the other well but seldom are good at maintaining interactivity with their audience and engaging them at the same time, let alone across multiple platforms. It also proposes that at present time, interactivity is a more attractive option for companies to focus their efforts and monetary investments. This is likely because it is easier to measure the level of interactivity versus the level of engagement. Yet, one cannot go without the other – companies must engage to interact and vice versa.

As detailed in the earlier chapter, Ford averages two Wall posts per day. In comparison, Mercedes usually has half the number of posts on its Wall (*Table 8*). Despite that, Mercedes' followers may be more engaged with the brand, based on the significantly larger proportion of Mercedes Facebook Page followers who Like Mercedes' Wall posts (*Table 8*). Assuming that the number of people who diligently follow a Facebook Page is represented by that number, it seems that a large Facebook following is not indicative of the size of its active audience. On the other hand, it is

acknowledged that not every visitor is compelled to, even at the minimum, Like Wall posts.

This observation may explain the willing and loyal Mercedes Benz owners who helped produce the *Mercedes Benz Impact* stories. It seems to suggest that Mercedes' ability to engage its audience has likely created an emotional connection with its consumers, such that they feel an affiliation with the brand. Court, Elzinga, Mulder and Vetvik (2009) call this audience "active loyalists," people who will consume only one brand and more importantly, advocate it to others. On the contrary, "passive loyalists" are consumers who are open to persuasion despite normally choosing one particular brand (Court et al., 2009).

Furthermore, it was noted that Ford's dominance on the social media platform in 2010 might have been spurred on by the notable increase in the ratio of Internet advertising expenditure [adex] over total advertising expenditure within the previous three years (Advertising Age, 2010) (*Figure 4*). In 2009, all three companies allocated greater proportions of their advertising expenditure to Internet advertising. Ford, in particular, almost tripled its Internet adex. It is assumed that Internet advertising will continue to increase across the board in 2010 and 2011, after taking into account the increased activity on social media platforms within the last year, including *The Ford Story*, *Toyota Auto-biography Facebook Campaign* and the *Mercedes Benz Impact* series.

Another point for consideration is the type of responses that each Facebook page attracts. Is it meaningful content or random messages that are unrelated? Furthermore, those active users who regularly post on Ford's Wall are often repeat users who post several times in a day. This begs the question if the number of Wall posts on any

Facebook Page is representative of the actual size of the population subscribed to that Facebook Page.

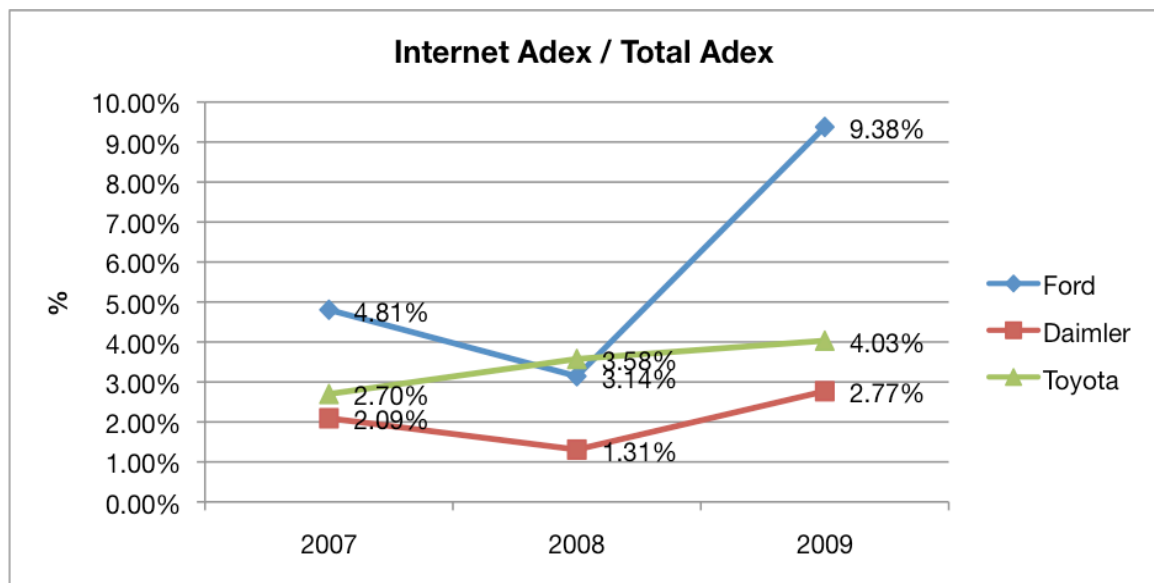


Figure 5. Ratio of Internet Advertising Expenditure to Total Advertising Expenditure.

This figure illustrates the companies' relative increase in Internet advertising expenditure.

Note. From data in Advertising Age (2010).

Limitations

This study was not without its limitations. For one, the observation of the Facebook pages was done over 14 days only. In the case of Ford, there was one anomaly in the number of responses to Wall posts by owner. This anomaly boosted its overall results in a way that is possible yet unrealistic. Without taking anything away from Ford, this outlier definitely tipped the scale more heavily in favor of Ford's marketing strategy.

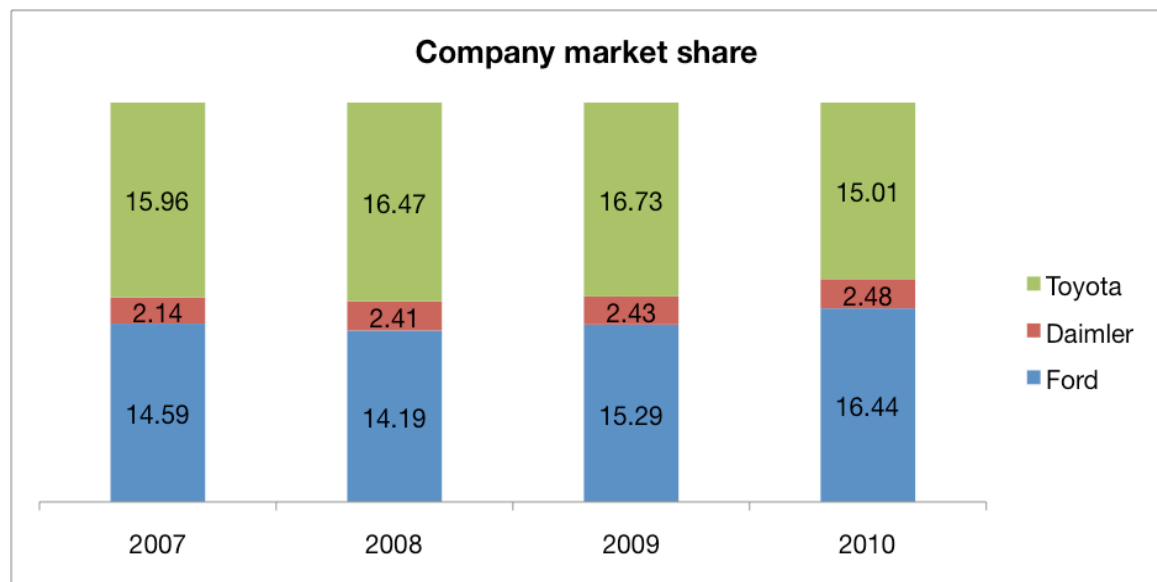


Figure 6. Company Market Share in the U.S. Automotive Industry. This figure illustrates the respective companies' percentage market share in the last four years.

Note. From data in Ward's Auto (2011).

As an extension of that, data suggests a positive correlation between the popularity of a company's social media network and its market share (*Figure 6*).

However, the three car makes did not fairly nor accurately represent the U.S. automobile industry as a whole.

Second, this research was neither detailed nor strict about what constituted interactivity loops. There were some Wall posts on the Ford and Toyota Facebook Pages whereby people Liked their own posts and submitted comments on their own Wall posts. This can be construed as a misrepresentation of interactivity as the definition does not hold when one interacts with himself or herself.

Third, this research did not take demographics into account. All three companies examined appeal to different demographics. This research would have been stronger had a survey been done to see how the digital stories affect the different demographics in terms of delivery platform, production value and the message relayed. Having said that, it would have been difficult to find a significant sample size of people that fit the specific demographic each automobile is targeting.

Fourth, this research was limited to the automobile industry. It is impossible to ascertain the impact of these marketing strategies on other industries without further study. For example, an Asian low cost airline's Facebook Page boasts more than 800,000 people who Like it. But upon closer inspection of the Wall posts, a significant number of these Wall posts were by users who are unhappy with the services provided. However, no man is an island. Interactivity and engagement are basic tenets of communication and cannot be undermined.

Fifth, thematic analysis is less transparent of a research method than other quantitative research methods. As thematic analysis is a rather individual critical task, questions of reliability and validity may arise.

Finally, advertising expenditure data was limited to the year 2009. Unfortunately, data for 2010 will only be released in the middle of 2011. While there is a trend that indicates the likelihood of further increases in Internet advertising expenditure, it is difficult to comprehensively conclude that without exposing this research to the vulnerabilities of being wrong.

Future Research

The explosion of social media on the Internet has raised a lot of questions about the value proposition that it brings to a company. It is undoubtedly imperative that companies adopt and embrace these new forms of communication. But there has also not been comprehensive study on the value proposition of user-generated branding through social media. At present time, companies may not yet have fully embraced social media but it definitely has its positives.

The research revolved around large corporations with financial muscle, but this research proposes that it also makes a good model for small, and medium businesses (SMBs) to adopt. With the advancement of technology, it is affordable and accessible for SMBs to embrace digital storytelling and social media to build its brand more quickly and to a wider audience. For future research, it would be useful to test these strategies on SMBs.

An extension from the above, another area of possible research is the impact of user-generated branding via digital storytelling and social media on SMBs. Hybrid forms of digital storytelling and social media are already adopted by non-profit organizations. It would be interesting to observe how it can do the same for SMBs, especially at a time when unemployment rates are high, economies are unable to support the growing number of unemployed and people are forced into the position of creating their own employment.

Conclusion

Social media has changed the business, advertising, communication and various other landscapes. Indeed, the rules have changed but the game has not. Marketers must understand their addressable markets in order to take advantage of the most effective platform to connect with their target markets. Social media and digital storytelling do not

replace good, traditional marketing. They work well as part of an overall strategy.

Nothing can replace the work required to understand your position and knowing how and where you want to engage people. Content is the lifeblood of social media, but it has to be compelling so that people will want to share it. All in all, social media and digital storytelling demand the same discipline and strategic thinking as any other medium, especially now when the conversations have become more direct, personal and immediate.

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Appendix A – Full Transcripts

Toyota Auto-biography Facebook Campaign Transcripts

Title: **The Big Hill**
Author: **Donna Replogle**

Donna With Steve delivering pizza and me delivering the newspaper, we put on about 8- to 900 miles a week on our Corolla. I travel on all kinds of roads, one of which is a hill that is known as Log Hill. It is a 1,200 foot climb on the windiest road you can imagine and, most of it is dirt road, which I am really impressed with my Corolla because it gets me there. Whether it's in raining, hail, sleet, snow, wind, y'know, it gets me up to the top with no problem whatsoever. My name is Donna Replogle and this is my Toyota Auto-Biography. a

Title: **The Duck Mobile**
Author: **Jen Mulder**

Jen I have lots of favorite memories in the Camry. They start when my grandfather actually brought it home off the lot. He was so proud of his new purchase. And then, when it became mine, that was another awesome day. And then, when I decided that it could be The Duck Mobile, it got even more fun. I've always loved rubber ducks, they just put a smile on my face. And I figured if I glued them on my Camry, more people could enjoy them. There are probably over 300 toys on the car. I also have a horn installed that makes quacking sounds, and when I'm in parades, I put a bubble maker on top so it shoots bubbles. When I'm driving The Duck Mobile, people love it. They smile, they honk, they wave, they snap pictures. If I'm having a bad day, all I need to do is drive The Duck mobile for about two blocks and then somebody smiles at me and I'm just like, it's over, it's a whole another day. So yeah, it definitely keeps me in good spirits as well. My Camry now has 258,000 miles on it. I plan on going to a million miles in The Duck Mobile. My name is Jen Mulder and this is my Toyota Auto-Biography.

Title: **The Green Machine**
Author: **Dave Rodriguez**

Dave Well, in 1993, me and my wife had four kids and we needed a bigger car. So we found this green one, Toyota Camry LE and er, we bought it. When we were driving it, we thought, 'what are we gonna call this car?' We said, 'er, let's call it the green machine' 'cause it was big and green. Just big and

green and er, well we took a lot of road trips in that green machine. Oh, one I remember the most was the road trip to Mount Rushmore. We had no plans. So it was go and find a place wherever we could. So we decided to stop in Sturgis. Here come motorcycles, and motorcycles, and motorcycles, and motorcycles. What we didn't know was there was a massive motorcycle rally there at the time. We were surrounded. We were out of our element, in a Toyota, being surrounded by thousands of motorcycles. That was more than ten years ago and some 365,000 miles later, my kids are grown, on their own in college, and they drive around in their own Toyotas now. I hope to take my first grandchild on a few road trips. But maybe not to Sturgis. My name is Dave Rodriguez and this is my Toyota Auto-biography.

Title: **The Midnight Snack**

Author: **Jimmy Hinton**

Jimmy One year, some friends of mine from college had decided to go on a Spring Break and we wanted to go out West so we drove out to California, to Yosemite. We had been driving for several days and hadn't slept much and, the park ranger had told us when we parked the car, she said the first thing you wanna do is take all the food out. And she said even down to the gum wrappers because we have problems with bears getting into the cars. And, I took her very seriously and took all the food out of my car. We were exhausted and laid down and went to bed that night. And in the morning there was a gentleman who came up to us and said, 'Hey, does anybody own a Toyota Camry?' And I said, 'I do.' He said, ' You might wanna go look at your car.' So we walked out to the parking lot and sure enough my car had been broken into by the bear, ripped into the back door, got in, ripped the back seat apart and got into the trunk of the car. The joke became that my car got eaten by a bear. After fixing it, I drove it for about a year and sold it to my brother with over 300,000 miles on it. My name is Jimmy Hinton and this is my Toyota Auto-biography.

Title: **The New Car**

Author: **Dee Nirschl**

Dee I bought our Corolla in 1988 and, it was the first brand new car I had ever bought. And my son was about four years old then and he was really excited about having this new car. And that's what he called it, it was the new car. And for many years we all called it the new car because that's how he always referred to it. In 1989, my daughter was born and we

brought her home from the hospital in the Corolla. And then when she got old enough to drive we actually taught her to drive in that Corolla. It was the family car and so over the years with their sports, going to practices and games, there were all kinds of hockey bags and sticks and softball and baseball bags and gear I stuffed into the trunk of that Corolla. I'm living proof that you can raise kids in a Corolla and carry all their gear. Now it has over 200,000 miles on it and I still drive it. I love it. It's really funny because people are always asking to buy it. I don't wanna sell it. I can't imagine getting rid of it because it's such an icon for our family. My name is Dee Nirschl and this is my Toyota Auto-Biography.

Title: **The Road Test**
Author: **Drew Arthur**

Drew Everyone hates driving in Los Angeles but my favorite time is in my car. And so I got the Corolla because all my other cars had crapped out on me. I used to date this, she was an adult with a job, and like a 401K, and I was not. We were huge on road trips. I knew her for three months before we went to Santa Barbara. What happened there was, she just freaked out about everything. We went out to this nice seafood restaurant and she just freaked out on the waiter. Maybe we're out of shampoo, what are you gonna do, are you gonna freak out? Or are you just gonna be cool with it? She freaked out. We went there, found out we were not right for each other and then took the awkward ride home. I normally don't listen to the radio but I was just like, we're gonna listen to this radio, so.. we have since broken up. But now that I have my Corolla, I feel more like an adult. My name is Drew Arthur and this is my Toyota Auto-Biography.

Mercedes Impact Campaign Transcripts**Title:** In a Drunk Driver's Path**Author:** Joe Miller - Dallas, TX

Joe Right here, the first car in line when the, uh, y'know just sitting, talking and chatting away, I mean, it was unreal, unreal, you'd, I can't say anymore than that. The accident happened in '98. I was with my fiancée, we were gonna go stop and have some dinner and then go home. Er, we were at the corner of 35 and Oak Lawn, stopped at a red light, um, right at the feeder road where the highway is. Just chatting away, waiting for the light to change. We just got slammed from behind and pushed out onto the, to the road. Er, apparently a drunk driver had hit us. Er, um, he'd, the cop estimated probably about 45 miles an hour. He didn't try to apply his brake or anything, he just slammed into the back of us. The automatic roll bars shot up, broke the, the convertible roof, the whole back of the car crumpled up, and, um, we got out. But the car did exactly as it was designed. We were able to get out of the car. They didn't have to pry us out or anything. The doors were still functioning even though the back was just completely crushed.

It took us a few minutes to figure out what was going on but we got out and then we realized we're ok. I mean, it's, it's such a amazing feeling that you're ok, that everything's gonna be good. And then the fact that what happened hits you and you just get, you get sick to your stomach. We were in a convertible. We could've been thrown over, been thrown out, rolled, that what ifs are endless. Police came and said that car saved our lives because had we not been in the car that was designed the way it was, it would've probably have killed us. That's the only thing you've got going for you - is the car you're in. If you wanna take every bit of control out of your life, be hit. Because wherever the car goes, you're going and there's nothing you can do. You have absolutely no control over your life. Y'know, the trauma is, mental, more than it is anything else because the physical wasn't that bad. No one has a chance of getting out of this life alive. Period. So you might as well enjoy everything you can and the people that are around you, and remember to tell them you love them and take the time with them because tomorrow they may not be here or you might not be here. So enjoy that time.

(text) <Joe Miller now drives a 2004 Mercedes-Benz SL500>

Title: Dragged by an 18-Wheeler**Author:** Christine Favaro - Demarest, NJ

- Christine I've always felt that I was a good driver, and oh, nothing's gonna, I was never in a car accident before. But you don't know what the other guy's gonna do. It was me, my mom, my dad, my son and my daughter. There wasn't even a lot of traffic around. It was like a, y'know, a calm, nice day. Then all of a sudden, out of nowhere this guy came.
- Husband A tractor trailer, performed an illegal U-turn, and, did not see Christine and um, hit her.
- Christine I can't even describe to you the impact and the crash having an 18-wheeler coming at you at full speed and connecting onto your car.
- Antoinette And we hit, and we got dragged to the other side of this road. We went from the right side, all the way to the left side and ended up on the er, embankment on the left.
- Husband The car was actually, er, from what I understand, hooked into the truck so the truck was dragging it. And when the truck actually hit a tree, it broke the car free.
- Christine But the one thing for me was not hearing anything in the back. Sorry. But they were ok.
- John To me, it was a miracle that we walked out the way we did.
- Antoinette Yes.
- John Seriously.
- Husband You think about the worst obviously, but you always know in the back of your head, you're hoping for the best, in the back of your head. Knowing that, y'know, that my family could've been wiped out in one accident, everybody.
- Christine That 18-wheeler should've crushed us, we all should've been crushed.
- John The car never gave up. And the car stood its ground, on four wheels. That's what very surprising to me.
- Husband That car saved their lives, without a doubt. That was the one thing on my head as dr-, as I was driving down to the hospital, was that thank God they were in that car and not some tin can.
- Antoinette To have the children in that car and nothing happened, just that in itself is a miracle.
- Husband To know, they all could've been dead, and to, to get to the hospital and to see, y'know, Julia crying because she's upset or John crying, because she's upset, was fine, y'know. That's, I can handle that. I tell you, you'll get some friends and some of your family members saying, oh, what do you need that car for? That's why I need that car.
- (text) <The Favaro family now drives a 2010 Mercedes-Benz GLK 350>

Title: Not Through Yet

Author: Steve Phillips - Stamford, CT

Deborah About a year ago, my husband was diagnosed with colon cancer. He went through seven months of chemo, to make sure it was completely gone, got a clean bill of health in like February.

Catherine And that happened and we thought everything was ok, like, nothing else bad is gonna happen for a while. We're done. And then this happens.

Deborah The road that I had my accident on is notorious for car accidents. And they're almost always fatal.

Steve It was, Sunday, June 13th. We proceeded up the street as we've done a million times in the past. Looking out the front window, kinda get an odd pattern of things going on in front of us. Can't quite immediately discern what that's all about.

Deborah And I was coming around a corner and right when I was able to see ahead of me in the road, there was a car in front of me, then there was a large SUV.

Steve But quickly realized a car coming southbound towards us has crossed the center lane of the two-lane highway, and came directly at us.

Deborah I, I was watching the most horrific thing a driver could watch, which is, this very large car is coming at me um, and there's no place this car can go.

Steve It's true what they say about these things sometimes happening in slow motion. That's the sensation I had. Like a slow motion movie or an old time movie. Click, click, click, click. And then the impact itself.

Deborah It was all up to the car. It was my car against his car. That simple. As the impact happened, the main memory I have is the sound, the sound of the impact was tremendous. When the accident was over, and we were stopped and settled, er, I immediately realized we're ok. We're, I can't believe it, we're ok.

Deborah Whatever is in the front end, design engineering design, took the energy from that collision.

Catherine And I didn't know what I was gonna find, and I got home and they were fine. Like they were walking fine, everything.

Steve That's the, that's the cabin of the car. And it's absolutely intact. It's like nothing ever happened.

Deborah The EMS people told me, um, it's unheard of to have a 50 mile an hour head-on collision, people are walking away from this.

Steve I've always believed life is precious. This has just confirmed that belief.

Deborah After this accident, the only car she is allowed to drive is my car or my husband has an E-Class. She can take whichever Mercedes she wants. You have to at some point, consider, y'know what if? What if I had not been in this, in this wonderful car? What if I had not had the protection of this wonderful car? Y'know, what did I not say to people that are, that are in my life, that are important in my life?

Steve My family, obviously, is precious to me. They are what I live for. They are my number one love, they are my number one everything. It's, it's what I do, who I am.

Deborah My husband and I feel that we have been given a very special gift in that we can keep on with our plan 'cause we really are not through yet. We really are not through yet.

(text) <The Phillips family now drives a 2009 Mercedes-Benz C300>

Title: A Pick-Up Flips Onto the Roof

Author: Angela Logan - Oakland, CA

Angela It just made me realize how precious, family in life are. Y'know, because if y'all buy my car, it's based on how they looked. Never really thought about, y'know, oh, ok are they safe cars?

Erik I mean, cars really wasn't a big thing, for me, y'know. But er, once, y'know, family and children are coming to the picture, me being a firefighter, me seeing um, extreme accidents and things of that nature, I want my family to be in something safe.

Angela I had actually, that's when I had my S, one of my S series, and I had taken it in to either get them, something unnecessary like the windows tinted or something like that. I took the car to the shop. So they gave me a loaner car. They gave me a C class. I, left, well, I didn't get that far. I got in the car 'cause they had parked it right in front of the dealership for me on Broadway and so literally, I pull away from the curb and just go to the left turn only lane. I look over to my left and I see a car, driving down, reaching down the hill, he hits this F-150 in the back, in the cab. It swings and I see it, it was the scariest thing. He hits the front of the car and then it flips up and then lands on top of my car. And then some of the windows busted out from y'know, the impact. I had the airbag come from the front, the airbag come from the side, and there was an airbag that came from this side. So, when I went to duck, they all kinda, kinda protected me and just kinda like say, kinda encapsulated me. A lot of people say, oh, my life flashed before my eyes. It didn't. I just knew that it was nothing I could do. It was the most violent thing I ever experienced. Wasn't one of the most. It was the most. Just not knowing if the roof was gonna cave in on me or, or what was going on, that was the scariest thing to me. And this picture reminds me of that. Um, I just remember this point, I just remember the truck being on top of me like that and just trying to make sure I could move. And that, y'know, I was gonna be able to get out of the car 'cause I was just so scared, um, having the car on top of me.

Erik I mean, it's just looking like the drive, the driver's side is just, is just totally, totally collapsed. So in your mind you're wondering, where or what state is the driver in? And, it's just er, it's actually amazing y'know, amazing right there. So this is, this is the one right here.

Angela My daughter was just hysterical, not knowing if her mother's ok or not ok and there was a possibility like I said if I had been in another car, her mother may not have been ok. It could've been so much worse. It could've been so much worse. I had no injuries. I don't even have any scratches. Like, I don't even have any scratches. Before I was just really into, y'know, just working, working, working and making money. Now that I, y'know I'm married, y'know, have Jasmine and now a new baby, it's just the family is way more important.

Erik I'm just glad that she was in something that protected her, y'know. So we could be in this situation.

Angela I know.
<show newborn's picture>

(text) <The Logan family now drives a 2008 Mercedes-Benz R350>

Title: The "What If" Game
Author: Dan Kennedy - Long Beach, CA

Dan The "What Ifs". Y'know, I've thought about that a lot. You play the "What If" game. It's en, it's inevitable. You're gonna do it. And, say I survived, but y'know, my legs didn't make it out of the car, with me. Where would I be now? What would I be doing now? I mean, just a matter, a matter of milimeters, could've ended my hopes and dreams as an athlete. Very easily.

Terry That day, we were just any old regular weekend up in Santa Barbara. And er, to enjoy Danny's soccer games.

William So we started back and I guess we were probably about 45 minutes into the trip and y'know, the, the 101 freeway up there is, is not well lit.

Dan We're just driving along, driving along, just chatting about the night, whatever else, cruise control 70 miles an hour, not thinking about too much.

William And I remember climbing a slight rise.

Dan Next thing I know, the car that was in front of me swerved off the road.

William I was in the passenger seat so I think I was the first one to see the oncoming car. Um, and I remember saying to Dan, I just said, 'Oh, Dan.' And it was more of a prayer than anything 'cause at that point, I couldn't imagine surviving.

Terry I knew in my mind we were being hit by a drunk driver. I, I knew that because anyone on the freeway going 65 miles an hour, in that fast lane, going in the wrong direction, that's not right.

Dan I mean, you can imagine, two cars going about 70 miles an hour in opposite directions, hitting, hitting head-on.

William It actually was so violent that I think I blacked out. I think we all blacked out.

Terry I remember waking up and I remember my husband saying, I'm ok, Dan are you ok? And Danny says, I'm ok. I'm thinking in my head, how can they possibly be ok?

William I mean, as soon as we stopped, I remember looking at Dan and saying, can you, can you get out? Can you get out of the car? And he says no, my legs' trapped.

Terry Danny I, I was really thinking could have some major injuries to his legs.
Dan I had the dashboard just covering me. The steering wheel was in my lap. And the car was just smashed up against me but there was definitely that, that cage that my body was supposed to be in and be protected in and, and it worked. I knew I was ok and I was worried about everyone else, as you do, in your fam, in your family. And my mom was in and out of consciousness, and that was, that was scary.

Terry Danny, said, Mom, reach for my hand, and, this is when I'll get emotional, 'cause he said 'hold my hand'. And he, he put his hand back and all's I could do was sit there and hold his hand. But that's the kind of boy he is.

Dan You could see the way, that the 101 freeway is set up - it's hilly, it's on the cliffs, and, you could see the fire engines and the ambulance coming. You could see them coming. But it was just like, couldn't come fast enough. It really couldn't.

William The, next decision for me was to um, stay with Dan 'cause they said they were gonna take 45 minutes to an hour to cut, with a jaws-of-life, cut him out of the car.

Dan's sister My, my little brother, he doesn't seem very little but to me, he always is. Had to sit in that car and, while he was trapped, as the fireman asked my dad to stay with him or go with my mom and, how brave he must have, had to been, to say, dad, go with mom.

Dan They had to take the door off, to er, get me out, and er, this is the emergency brake. And there's just a little space back there that my legs fit in and I slid in and out of there safely and, I was, well protected.

William When he showed up, um, it was a, a, just a great moment of my life.
Terry We all checked out fine. I can't even explain how lucky and fortunate we were to, y'know, to be in that car and to be that safe. We couldn't believe it. Danny played his soccer game the next day, which was amazing. I spent one night in the hospital just so they could check everything out, I checked out ok. And, um, actually was released the next day to go watch him play soccer.

Dan We were, at the wrong place, at the wrong time. But we were in the right car. We were in the right car.

(text) <The Kennedy family now drives a 2007 Mercedes Benz E 350>

Title: Crushed By A Truck
Author: Laurie Brill - Scottsdale, AZ

Laurie I was a paramedical makeup artist and I taught people who were disfigured from car accidents and fires, how to minimize your scars. But you think to yourself, y'know, I never want this to happen to me. And so I, researched which car would be the safest in case, y'know, God forbid I was in a car accident. The day of the accident was just a normal day. I was coming down the freeway, this huge truck hit me. I was listening to all the glass shatter like, all around me. (So crazy).

Joel The truck came, wasn't watching, drove over your trunk and drove over the top of your car.

Laurie And I saw the tire prints on top of my car. You can't believe that you're alive and that you lived through that. Y'know what the police officer said, y'know what, if you'd have been in any other car, you'd be dead. I wouldn't have my kids, I wouldn't have my husband; God, I'd have nothing. Nothing.

Joel I can't imagine what life would've been like without her. I can't really imagine how much emptiness that would've caused.

Laurie Hands down, I will never drive anything but a Mercedes. I mean, it saved my life. Sometimes it's good to think about some of the bad stuff that happens to you because it makes you really appreciate all the good stuff that's happening and how lucky, really, all of us are.

Joel Our life, our kids, ahh, are all due to Laurie. You really kept it together.

Laurie Thank you.

Joel You really did.

Laurie Yeah, you're lucky.

Joel Lucky?

Laurie Yeah.

Joel More than you know. Really, more than you know.

(text) <The Brill family now drives a 2007 Mercedes-Benz GL 450.>

Title: A Baby Named Crash
Author: Carla Kok - Las Vegas, NV

Bill So this is Crash, you guys have met, heard about Crash. We've renamed her Paiten. She's no longer Crash, she was Crash while she was still in Mommy's tummy.

Carla Yeah. Bill and I worked pretty hard to start our own family, so, when I did, thankfully, become pregnant, we decided that we should get a safer car when that made sense. And we picked the Mercedes S 63.

Bill I think the date was November 18th.

- Carla Bill and I are both attorneys. So I had a court hearing that was scheduled for 1:30. I'm headed for my court hearing. I was maybe on the freeway, ten seconds, and the traffic had come to a complete halt. So I stopped. (Carla alone) and I look in my rear view mirror 'cause anytime anyone typically comes to a stop where you shouldn't be coming to a stop, your gut reaction, your instinct is to look in your rear view mirror and make sure the person behind you, is coming to a stop. Which they weren't. So they were coming at me at freeway speed. And, two seconds later I was hit by a woman going, they estimated between 65 and 68 mph.
- Bill I picked up the phone and I er, just remember being told that there was, had been a car accident. And that, the car was totaled on the freeway and they were taking Carla to University Medical Center trauma center. The police said that, that the driver never even hit their brakes. It drove her from the far right hand lane, across all the lanes of traffic and then she hit the cement center median on the freeway.
- Carla Once she hit me though and I knew, I had that realization that I'm crossing, I felt I was going to die. That moment in time, (long pause). During that moment, pretty much said goodbye to everybody. I remember looking up at the sky, as I'm traveling across the Interstate, just loving everybody, being thankful anyway, and just sending my love to everybody; Bill and my baby especially.
- Bill I remember calling, calling the doctor whose, y'know, the OBGYN, on the way and trying to, y'know, because knowing Carla was pregnant, trying to reach them and get the word out to the doctors that we may have problems and that she had been in an accident.
- Carla Y'know, I had my cognition, I had, I could talk, so I think part of me was like "Wow", I'm okay, I don't have a head injury, I don't think, y'know, there's no, I, I know what's going on um, and then the paramedics arrived and I will say one of the first things out of his mouth after they asked me some basic cognitive questions was, "This car saved your life." Um, which I'd already figured that one out. Once they got me on the flat board, and in the ambulance, I was pretty redundant about 'please just check the baby first, please just check that the baby has a heartbeat, please just check the baby has a heartbeat. Um..
- Bill The paramedics confirmed that they had, were monitoring the baby's heartbeat and that er, and the baby was um, stable.
- Carla And so y'know it was kind of a sigh of relief.
- Bill We came real close to losing Carla and the baby and I know that we feel in our heart that car, that Mercedes big S-class sedan, um, saved her life.
- Carla Y'know, once things sort of calmed down and Bill said now we're gonna start looking for another car again, y'know, what do you want? And I just kinda looked up at him and I said 'are you kidding? I want the exact same car.'
- (text) The Coulthard family now drives a 2008 Mercedes-Benz S63.

Ford *One More Reason* Series Transcripts**Feature: Fusion Hybrid Eco-Driving**

Carl And er, I pulled up next to a guy with a hybrid the other day, and it was like
 Edwards when the light turned green, we both pulled off real slow, y'know, just
 trying to, just keep the car in electric. That was, that was funny.
 (text) <Ford Fusion Hybrid>
 (text) <Pace yourself in one>
 (text) <Drive one>

Feature: Fusion Hybrid with BLIS

Carl This light will come on, and er, and it just cues you, there's a vehicle there,
 Edwards and you need to use a little bit of caution. I mean, I don't know about you
 guys but, I've been surprised by cars quite a bit.
 (text) <Ford Fusion Hybrid>
 (text) <See the light in one>
 (text) <Drive one>

Feature: Fusion Hybrid with SYNC

Carl Y'know, I can push the button on the steering wheel, and say, y'know, call
 Edwards Kanye West or, I don't really have Kanye's number. But I can say call
 whoever and it'll call and it works.
 (text) <Ford Fusion Hybrid>
 (text) <Call whoever in one>
 (text) <Drive one>

Feature: Fusion Hybrid

Carl I did pull up next to a guy in a Prius the other day. It was funny, like me
 Edwards and that guy had a, little, look. It was cool, he kinda eyeballed mine. I was
 like, you know you wish you had this.
 (text) <Ford Fusion Hybrid>
 (text) <Out-hybrid one>
 (text) <Drive one>

Feature: Adam and Amie

Adam I feel really comfortable driving the Flex. None of my friends have kids, so,
 if I pulled up in a minivan they'd probably say, 'Are you driving your
 mom's car?'
 (text) <Ford Flex>
 (text) <Break the mold in one>
 (text) <Drive one>

Feature: Adam Fusion Hybrid

Adam I used to have an old GPS that kinda went on my windshield, it wouldn't
 understand anything I was saying. The new one, it actually gets it great.

(text) [Please say a command]. Destination home. [Destination home].
 (text) <Ford Fusion Hybrid>
 (text) <Be understood in one>
 (text) <Drive one>

Feature: David Flex

David All the seats fold down except for the driver's seat. I like to ride BMX. I actually have a bike sitting back there. With only one row folded. So I can get five people in here with the bike in the back.

(text) <Ford Flex>
 (text) <Be flexible in one>
 (text) <Drive one>

Feature: Hayley Escape Hybrid

Hayley I absolutely love driving an SUV and I don't feel guilty because even if someone says something, I can say mine's a hybrid. And everyone's like no way, I can't believe that.

(text) <Ford Escape Hybrid>
 (text) <Believe in one>
 (text) <Drive one>

Feature: Jesse Focus

Jesse Cool thing about this is er, it's equipped with SIRIUS radio. Like, so many different genres. There's, there's something like 200 channels. You can listen to Korean news.

(text) <Ford Focus>
 (text) <Think global in one>
 (text) <Drive one>

Feature: John Transit Connect

John One of the real reasons that we were interested in it is that we felt that when we're making a delivery, because it's such a nice van, y'know, it's very unique looking, y'know, it represents our business very well.

(text) <Ford Transit Connect>
 (text) <Represent in one>
 (text) <Drive one>

Feature: Kris Allen Fusion Hybrid with EcoGuide

Kris Allen There's like a little meter where there's like leaves come up. The more leaves, the better your car's doing on gas mileage. Pretty much, it's like a video game to me. I'm just trying to get the most leaves that I can.

(text) <Ford Fusion Hybrid>
 (text) <Be leafy in one>
 (text) <Drive one>

Feature: Kris Allen Fusion Hybrid with SYNC

Kris Allen You just push the voice command button and you say whatever you wanna do. Play, y'know, this music, or call this person, or go to this place. All you have to do is talk. I think most people are pretty good at that.

(text) <Ford Fusion Hybrid>

(text) <Have a chat with one>

(text) <Drive one>

Feature: Kris Allen Fusion Hybrid

Kris Allen I was playing a show in Napa and we were, almost out of gas. So you just type in the gas station and the closest one came up. It even shows you the price. This one's \$2.98, this one's \$3.09. I'm gonna go to the \$2.98 one, which is awesome.

(text) <Ford Fusion Hybrid>

(text) <Be awesome in one>

(text) <Drive one>

Feature: Michael Escape

Michael The first time I saw the new model of it was in my garage at work. I parked next to it with my old car and I was like, 'Hmm, this is a lot nicer and cooler looking than mine.'

(text) <Ford Escape>

(text) <Be enviable in one>

(text) <Drive one>

Feature: Paul Escape

Paul Such a little thing but I, I just love it as um, just the like the one touch sunroof. You just close it and it goes and locks into position. Before, I'd have to like, y'know, working with it to get it locked.

(text) <Ford Escape>

(text) <Open up one>

(text) <Drive one>

Feature: Vanessa Focus with SYNC

Vanessa They have this, little USB, is something I've never ever seen. USB. [USB]. And it'll start playing.

(text) <Ford Focus>

(text) <Drive one>

Feature: Vanessa Focus

Vanessa (singing) I sing in here all the time. It's like my karaoke car. (singing) That's my jam.

(text) <Ford Focus>

(text) <Be your own idol in one>

(text) <Drive one>

APPENDIX B**CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING AUTOMOTIVE COMPANIES' FACEBOOK PROFILES****(adapted from Benoit & Benoit's Criteria for Evaluating Political Campaign Websites)**

CRITERIA	FORD	MERCEDES	TOYOTA
IDENTIFICATION			
Company identified	YES	YES	YES
Date Revised	YES	YES	YES
ID Information in Consistent Location	YES	YES	YES
Contact Information In "Information" Box	YES	NO	YES
Contact Information On "Info" Page	YES	YES	YES
NAVIGATION			
Moving within the Site	YES	YES	YES
Links Obvious and Working	YES	YES	YES
Menus Clear, Limited to 5 - 7 "Pages"	NO	NO	YES
IRRITABILITY			
Link to Plug-In	YES	YES	YES
Frames Used Effectively	NO	YES	YES
INFORMATION ACCESSIBILITY			
How Information is Subdivided	YES	NO	YES
Information Organized for Users	YES	YES	YES
Number of Levels	YES	YES	YES
New Information Identified	YES	YES	YES
INTEREST LEVEL			
Use of Digital Storytelling	NO	YES	YES
Text and Graphics Balanced	YES	YES	YES
Multi-media Used Effectively	YES	YES	YES
Page Gets Attention "Above Fold"	YES	YES	YES
Entice User to Return	YES	YES	YES
Visual Images (Cars, Events, People)	YES	YES	YES
INFORMATION BREADTH AND DEPTH			
Biography	YES	NO	NO
Philosophy / Mission / Vision Statement	YES	NO	YES
SUPPORT			
Media Quotations	NO	NO	NO
Favorite Pages	YES	NO	YES

Messages	NO	NO	NO
Web Links	YES	YES	YES
ADAPTED TO AUDIENCE	YES	YES	YES
INTERACTIVE			
Opportunity to Provide Wall Post	YES	NO	YES
Opportunity to Comment on Wall Post	YES	YES	YES
Control Over User-Generated Content	NO	YES	NO
Ability to become a fan / "Like"	YES	YES	YES
Contribute Consumer Stories	YES	YES	YES
Upload Photos/Videos	YES	NO	YES
Share Links	YES	NO	YES
Encourage Internet Poll Voting	YES	NO	YES
Discussion Room	YES	NO	NO
Subscribe to Facebook Updates via SMS	YES	YES	YES
Respond to Wall Posts/Comments	YES	YES	YES
Order Company Merchandise	NO	YES	NO

Appendix C
Basic Elements Of A Story

Ford					
Title	Setting	Character	Plot	Conflict	Resolution
Fusion Hybrid Eco-Driving - Carl Edwards	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Fusion Hybrid with BLIS - Carl Edwards	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Fusion Hybrid with SYNC - Carl Edwards	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Fusion Hybrid - Carl Edwards	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Adam and Amie	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Adam Fusion Hybrid	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
David Flex	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Hayley Escape Hybrid	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Jesse Focus	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
John Transit Connect	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Kris Allen Fusion Hybrid with EcoGuide	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Kris Allen Fusion Hybrid with SYNC	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Kris Allen Fusion Hybrid	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Michael Escape	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Paul Escape	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Vanessa Focus with SYNC	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Vanessa Focus	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Mercedes					
Title	Setting	Character	Plot	Conflict	Resolution
In A Drunk Driver's Path	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Dragged by an 18-Wheeler	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Not Through Yet	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

Title	Setting	Character	Plot	Conflict	Resolution
A Pick-Up Flips Onto the Roof	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
The "What If" Game	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Crushed By A Truck	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
A Baby Named Crash	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Toyota					
Title	Setting	Character	Plot	Conflict	Resolution
The Big Hill	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO
The Duck Mobile	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
The Green Machine	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
The Midnight Snack	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
The New Car	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
The Road Test	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES